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# The Works of Archbishop Averky



VOLUME II





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Compiled by  
Father Demetrios Serfes

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA



THE WORKS OF  
ARCHBISHOP AVERKY

Volume II

Compiled by Father Demetrios Serfes

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IN MEMORY OF THE BLESSED REPOSE OF  
ARCHBISHOP A V E R K Y  
OF SYRACUSE AND HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY  
31ST MARCH/ 13TH APRIL, 1976





## FOREWORD

In our time, authentic and true Orthodoxy--The Body of Christ--is being attacked from all sides. Because there are so few who are both willing and able to speak out in defense of the faith, the time has come when each of us is called upon to go forth as defenders of holy Orthodoxy. To accomplish this, it is necessary for us to look at our holy faith with a greater love than we have in the past: to renew our commitment to the Saviour; to deepen our understanding of the divinely-revealed teachings entrusted to us; and to be witnesses of His love and truth in the world. Christ has kept His promise to us: the Grace of God is with us. However, it is we who have to allow this grace to work within us, to encompass our whole mind, heart, and soul, and to transform us. Our faithfulness to the teachings of the Orthodox Church is our only defense against those dangers which the Church has met and defeated in the past and which once more besiege Her: heresy, ecumenism, opportunism, renovationism, modernism, and secularism.

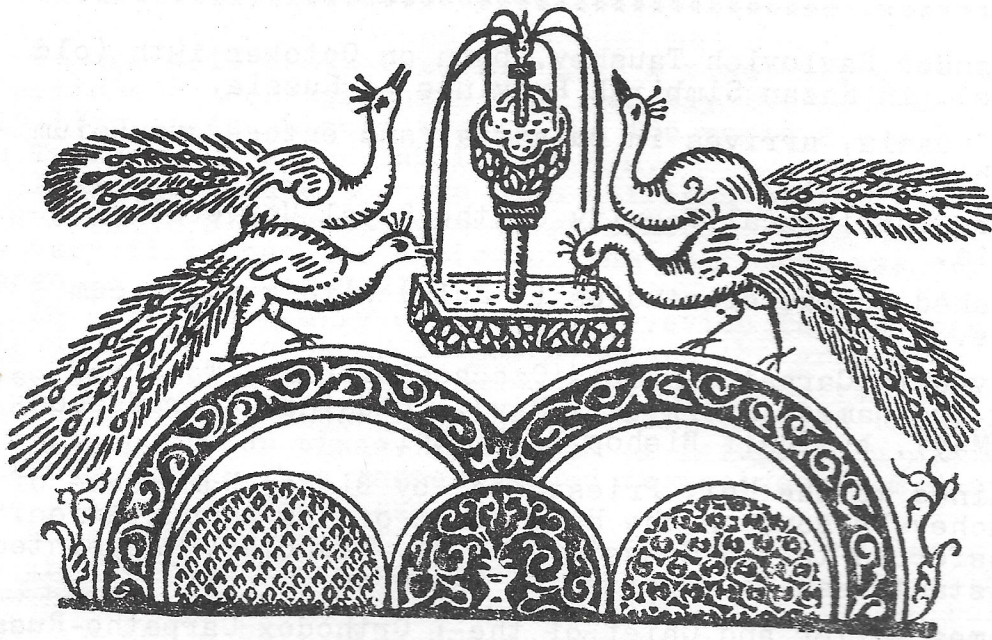
Archbishop Averky, of blessed memory, addresses himself to these issues in his writings so as to warn and protect us against the dangers of being weak-spirited or luke-warm concerning the faith in these difficult times when the holy Church is under attack. He saw very clearly that, for most, apostacy and betrayal of the teachings of Christ are less often conscious choices than they are sins of omission and of not being watchful. He not only addresses himself in a very practical way to the pitfalls which often ensnare the unsuspecting, the innocent believer, but also shows us where the solid ground can be found upon which we can walk with confidence. Vladika's spiritual counsels are rooted in his many years of experience as a shepherd; reflect how deeply he had studied the scriptures and the fathers; and manifest his exceptional qualities as a teacher.

The writings of Archbishop Averky are a well-spring of information for us to study, for they help us to understand the importance of our Orthodox Faith. They reveal to us that the authentic power and spirit of true Orthodoxy is manifest in us when we live our faith daily, acknowledge it, and speak out in its defense. He reminds us that our salvation is possible only by accepting wholeheartedly the undiluted, uncompromised Orthodox Faith as it has existed unchanged since the time of Christ. The world's values, ideologies, priorities, and criteria are in constant flux; they change and are replaced according to the fad of the day; but we must remain constant to those eternal values and teachings which allow us to view the world in which we live objectively. Vladika shows us how easily we can be misled by false teachings, and attracted to the personalities of false shepherds who preach the doctrine not of Christ but of this world. He urges us to concentrate on what is needful: to remain firm in our beliefs and to speak out in defense of them despite what is taking place around us. Even if all go astray there is no need for us to do likewise if we are firmly rooted in Christ's teachings: "I have called unto thee: save me, and I will keep thy testimonies (Kathisma XVII, Psalm 118).

The writings of Archbishop Averky are those of a loving father who guides with steadfastness but gently and with care to a clear understanding of what our faith is. His writings fill us with the joy of our faith. They help us to grow in that understanding which will strengthen our resolve to remain faithful and firm and thereby, by the grace of Christ, overcome our weaknesses.



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EVENTS OF THE LIFE OF  
HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP AVERKY

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- 1906 Alexander Pavlovich Taushev, born on October 19th (old style), in Kazan Simbirsk Province of Russia.
- 1920 Left Russia, arrives in Bulgaria, and enters gymnasium (high school).
- 1926 Enters Theological Faculty of the Royal University of Sophia.
- 1930 Finished course of studies (3 July) with a magna cum laude.
- 1931 Arrived in Carpatho-Russia Czechoslovakia. Tonsured monk and named: Averky (17 May). Ordained Hierodeacon (18 May), by Iosif Bishop of Bistol.
- 1932 Ordained to the Holy Priesthood, by Bishop Damascene of Mukachev-Presov, on the Holy Feast of the Annunciation. Transferred to the Monastery of St. Nicholas. Appointed Assistant Dean to a parish in Ushgorod.
- 1935 Becomes Editor and Chief of the : Orthodox Carpatho-Russian Herald Publication.
- 1937 Elevated Abbot (Igumen). Became member of the Sacerdotal Committee.
- 1938 Appointed Dean, to a parish in Mukachev, Hungary; Administrator of the Mukachev-Presov Diocese.
- 1939 Appointed first referent of the Diocesan Administration.
- 1940 Arrives in Belgrade. Taught in Pastoral Missionary School, and the Chairman of the Belgrade, Parish Council. Arrives in Austria.
- 1945 Arrives in Munich, Germany with the Synod of Bishops. Taught in Secondary Schools.
- 1950 Appointed Chairman of the Missionary Educational Committee.
- 1951 Arrives in America, teaches at Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Seminary, in Jordanville, New York. Organized St. Vladimirs Youth Organization.
- 1952 Appointed Rector of the Holy Trinity Seminary (17 Feb.).
- 1953 Nominated Bishop of Syracuse-Holy Trinity Diocese (10 May) and consecrated a Bishop, on the Holy Feast day of the Holy Spirit.
- 1960 Appointed Abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York (10 May). Chairman of the St. John of Kronstadt Foundation. Published Information Bulletin.
- 1961 Elevated to the rank of Archbishop.
- 1976 Reposed in the Lord: (31, March/ 13, April).

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Information from: Orthodox Life., St. Job of Pochaev Press., Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York., Vol. 26, No. 3., May-June, 1976, pp. 17-32, author Hieromonk Ignatius.



IN MEMORY OF ARCHBISHOP AVERKY  
BEGINNING OF HIS EARTHLY LIFE\*

It was with great interest that I read Hieromonk Ignatius's article in Pravoslavnaia Rus' for May 14, 1976 on the earthly life of Archbishop Averky, in the world Alexander Pavlovich Taushev, or Shura, as I knew him.

I was fortunate to have been a friend of the Right Reverend Averky in his gymnasium (high school) years in Varna, at the very time when the choice of the spiritual was born and developed in his young soul.

In 1920 the family of Paul Sergeyevich Taushev was cast by fate upon the shores of Bulgaria, where the groups of the refugees and military units from Odessa, Novorossiysk, the Crimea, and other Russian Black Sea ports were carried in waves, without passports or visas, in search of refuge in a sister Christian country; they thereby saved themselves from death and the prisons of the Cheka.

An extremely significant group of Russian refugees was formed in the moderate-sized Black Sea town of Varna, with its low houses under red-tiled roofs spread out on the rolling slopes of a small bay. The small provincial town was not able to find room for them all. Theaters were turned into dormitories, vacant military camps, city buildings, hospitals, and houses were filled to overflowing Typhus, scurvy and other diseases raged.

Bulgaria, which so recently had been in the enemy camp, i.e. an ally of Germany, sincerely responded to our boundless grief.

Quarantines, disinfection, and medical and social help soon restored the new arrivals to health, and as a result, a new, energetic life got underway.

All sorts of organizations appeared: the All-Russian Union of Cities, the Red Cross with an out-patient clinic (Dr. Kitovsky), military societies, the Russian House (Gen. Smerdov), a library, a home for children, exhibitions, performances, and even ballet presentations under the experienced direction of the ballerina Mrs. Ammon.

In the autumn of 1920 Sergei Nikolayevich Konanvich established the Varna Russian Gymnasium, and a little later Bishop Simeon of Varna and Preslav made available the spacious Greek Church of St. Athanasius to the Russian clergy to provide services for the Russian colony. The church was in the Greek style, with rich marble trim, large icons in glass frames on the iconostasis, monumental candlestands, an abundance of chandeliers on long chains, and two rows of columns dividing the church into three parts. With the church was a large parish hall with a basement with half-filled in catacomb passages which were used during the Turkish domination, and so it was said, went far beyond the city in the direction of the Rumanian border.

A scout troop was soon formed, under whose banner (with a large image of St. George the Victorious on a white horse

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\* Written by Aleksei Dmitriyev-Koklin



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taking up its whole width) youth patrols were formed one after another. In the third patrol, the "Deer," 15 year old Shura Taushev was the patrol leader, while the author of these lines was an 8-year old boy first joined the new organization and received the history of scouting, its commandments, rules, and most appealingly, instructions on the attractive khaki uniform of shorts, a cap on the head with the scout lily, and black and white ribbons on the shoulder straps. A scout's friendship soon passes into a deep friendship, and in our circumstances Shura soon became our teacher and guide.

In Shura's small room everything was in order; there was a small desk, a rather large personal library which was zealously guarded. Here for the first time, and really the only time, in my life I made the acquaintance of the small-format books which the 14-year boy had managed to bring out of Russia. Among the many books, we were especially interested the detective series "The Mask Which Laughs" and "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes."

Shura loaned us one book apiece, wrote down precisely who had what, and replaced it with a new one when the finished book was returned. This literature awoke our imaginations and was reflected in all our encounters, where we were busy with looking for clues, detection, investigation of criminals, and trials. At this time Shura was interesting friend and organizer of our activities. The happy and carefree days of youth! How many pleasant memories remain from the camps, where in the dark of evening around the campfire we sang the scout songs: "We will direct our steps to the fields, we will sit around the campfires. We will fix the broken bridge, we will meet the old people and help them!"

I remember the first time I visited him at home. The Taushev family lived in the Greek section, called the "grytskata makhala" in Bulgarian. From this broad thoroughfare going up the mountain one had to turn into a narrow sidestreet paved with irregular cobblestones. The second stories of the house extended out over the street and almost completely blocked out the sunlight, so that the whole short street was always dark. At the end of the block, on the corner where a large iron lantern was attached to a house, the street started to go downhill and here, on the left side, on the second floor of one of the houses, lived Shura's parents, elderly people who lovingly cared for their only son. This whole Greek section, filled with ancient buildings, was a favorite place of Russian artists, and the remarkable lantern figured in many canvases, painted from various view-points and at different times of day. This location was five-minute walk from the church.

At the church of St. Athanasius, or St. Atanas in Bulgarian, the rector was the mitred archpriest Fr. John Slyunin. Our school chaplain, Fr. Paul Popov, was an excellent preacher, a sincere spiritual father to his pupils, and also a capable educator. His prestige among the students was very high;



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one could have any sort of good time in all the other subjects, but it was considered disgraceful not to have an "A" in religion. The high school had a Parents' Committee which was actively involved in the school program. I know of several instances where the Parents' Committee stood firm and demanded high standards both in the instruction and in the training of students.

Our high school priest, Fr. Paul, also served as the second priest in our church and was very demanding and strict. The periodic brief visits of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava and Pareyaslavl' electrified the faithful, and also the priests. The special majesty of the services was accompanied by the outstanding choir. In the church of St. Athanasius the choir of more than 40 people was directed by the talented director Theodore Patorzhinsky. There were excellent voices in that choir. I have been able to obtain testimony to the director's talent, but the choir is hardly equal to the one in Varna, whose performances could not be repeated. Patorzhinsky's performances in Varna were nothing less than a rare pearl found by chance and carried away by the passage of time. Many of the concert numbers have remained impressed on my mind for my whole life.

Shura also served in the altar. About ten of us of various ages acted as altar boys. Shura was one of the leaders. One of the altar boys' favorite occupations was ringing the bells. For this one had to run out of the church into the yard and clamber up onto the board of the rather primitive bell-tower from which one could reach the bell ropes. The obligations of the altar boys also included preparing the torches for processions, an activity which also interested us a lot.

General Wrangel, the Commander in Chief of the Volunterr Army, who had gone into exile, opened a boarding school, called the General Baron Peter Nikolayevich Wrangel Boarding School, which was attached to the Varna Russian Gymnasium. The volunteers from the units which had been evacuated and who had not finished their education in Russia came here. Among them were enlisted men from all sorts of units, Kuban and Don Cossacks, and even young officers who wanted to broaden their knowledge to enter the university. The first director of the boarding school was General Cherkes, a direct, somewhat short older man with a small white beard. Two of his children, Boris and Maria, were students in the higher classes.

I was soon accepted into the boarding school, and here the inner structure of a closed institution, military discipline, life in the country outside of town, receiving leave tickets, and new surroundings were reflected on my old style of life.

With time there arose a division between boarding students and day students. We all grew up and passed into higher grades, and with age Shura became more serious and less accessible. One thing in him which remained unchanged was his bushy hairdo, also a privilege of day students, since until the fifth grade the boarding students had their heads shaved. Shura's



IN MEMORY OF ARCHBISHOP AVERKY

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intimacy with Archbishop Theophan made him even deeper. He became mysterious to me, since after church services he stayed to help unvest the Archbishop and accompany him to the carriage which awaited Archbishop Theophan on the street outside the churchyard. And even though we were moved from the estates (with increase in number of students we occupied two estates) into the city, into the church hall attached to the Church of St. Athanasius, where General Smerdov was named director, Shura's detachment from the general school life became stronger and stronger, and rumors went about that he was planning to enter the theological academy, which all considered the right choice, knowing his love for the church. The only contact which we still had with the future bishop was thanks to his love for books. He sometimes obtained very rare and valuable editions for us, which were read and discussed at length by everyone in the junior boarding school.

After the closing of the Tyrnovo-Seymenskaya Russian Gymnasium a part of the faculty was transferred to Varna. As a result a Female Boarding School (under the direction of Mrs. Feodorova) was opened, which introduced many fine and beautiful things into our school life. The final addition to the Varna Russian Gymnasium was the uniting to it of the Constantinople "British School for Russian Boys and Girls" which had been located in the building of the old Russian embassy in Buyuk-Dere on the shores of Bosphorus. It was under the direction of an Anglican pastor, Mr. Churchward, who was married to the Russian actress Sophia Pavlovna. Mr. Churchward had ties with America and Australia and was able to obtain modest sums from philanthropic funds. He subsequently became director, and the gymnasium continued to graduate new students.

During the whole time it existed, the Varna Russian Gymnasium was nothing less than an exceptionally valuable and rare core of Orthodoxy and Russianness. Two of my classmates with whom I served as an altar boy in church chose religious paths—one that of a priest, the other of a monk.

In 1929 I left Bulgaria to continue my education, and in 1930 I learned that Shura had become a monk in Czechoslovakia. Against my will I thought of his parents and how they were experiencing a lonely old age. But God is merciful and everything is in His will.

The words of the Right Reverend Vladika Averky are true: "It is with the most gratifying feelings that I recall the years of my study in that high school (V.R.G.) 1920-1926." Shura was in the fifth graduating class. My education there lasted three years longer; I belong to the eighth graduating class of 1929. In this high school I completed the full course of secondary education, and the sentence quoted from Vladika Averky about the Varna Russian Gymnasium could be repeated by any of us.

According to the unsearchable ways of the Lord young souls hastened to it to acquire knowledge, education, and cultural and spiritual development. Our ranks included Russians,



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Bulgarians, Armenians, Czechs, Greeks, Karaites, Jews, Georgians, Poles, and one Englishman. All lived as one united family in materially humble, but spiritually rich surroundings. In the first years of its existence, the Gymnasium did not have a permanent location. There were times when lessons were held on the sandy shores of the Black Sea, in the music shell of the city park, at the tables of a closed summer restaurant, and in the rooms of the Russian House. But these were short periods. Then we were taken in the large, fine halls of the large building of the Bulgarian girls' progymnasium or the equally well-equipped boys' Bulgarian gymnasium. For chemistry lessons we had to go to a different high school, which was always a pleasant walk, where the Bulgarian teacher made us acquainted with the very interesting subtleties of the newest discoveries about atoms and molecules.

Now when 50 years later one returns to those care-free happy years of our youth, a wave of gratitude swells up in one's soul toward those people-principled laborers—who assumed the responsibility for the labor of training the coming generation, among which Vladika Averky is a pillar of Orthodoxy.

In the Varna Russian Gymnasium a torch of pure Orthodoxy and of love for their homeland was lighted in the young souls. For some the fire of the torch warmed their souls, supported them in difficult moments, and ceaselessly lighted the course of their lives; in others it grew into a bright flame capable of shedding an ever brighter light around it.

Vladika Averky rendered glory a hundredfold to those who without ceasing bore service to our homeland and faith from the first days of our evil age.

Many have departed to eternal rest, but their labors have not remained fruitless. The fire of the torch which was lit in the Varna Russian Gymnasium has been transferred to Jordaville—the next stage of our wandering. Within the monastery walls there are growing up new servants of Orthodoxy which will multiply the torches throughout our diaspora and, God willing, will carry them back just as bright and pure to our much-suffering homeland.

A Russian thank you to all faithful sons of the Faith and homeland, and eternal glory to them!

Whose names, O Lord, you know.....\*



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\* Translated from: Orthodox Russia, by Father Deacon Seraphim Johnson., Issue No. 8., 1978., pp. 11-13., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.





SAINT JOHN OF KRONSTADT  
Commemorated on October 19 and December 20  
Canonized on October 19, 1964



St. John of Kronstadt:  
TOUCHSTONE OF TRUE ORTHODOXY

"The Orthodox attitude to the would be 'reformers' of our time is excellently expressed by a great Holy Father of our days, Archbishop Averky, who reposed in the Lord on March 31/ April 13, 1976. The following article is the introduction to one of his numerous homilies on St. John of Kronstadt." \*

In our evil time, when the servants of the coming Antichrist are putting forth all their efforts so as to undermine and replace authentic Orthodoxy with a false "Orthodoxy" an Orthodoxy only in name, there have appeared not a few "pastors" also who bear only the name of Orthodox but deny the authentic power and spirit of true Orthodoxy. Precisely such false pastors filled up the ranks of the "Living Church" and the "Renovated Church" clergy in our Russia.

But the "Living Church" and "Renovationism" were not recognized by the believing Russian people, who felt in their hearts their whole falsity; and they brilliantly collapsed on the Russian soil, ceasing their official existence. However, the spirit of the "Living Church" and "Renovationism" has not died, but has continued and up until now continues to live among us also in the Russian homeland, which has been enslaved by the godless, and also abroad among all the Orthodox Local Churches who have become infected with this pestilential spirit, not without, of course, the most strenuous cooperation of those same servants of the coming Antichrist.

These pseudo-pastors, modernists and ecumenists, in place of true Orthodoxy, preach and insistently propagandize false Orthodoxy, flattering all the sinful passions and vices of fallen man, striving in everything to go in step with the times and to adapt the Christian to the "world which lies in evil," under all possible cunning, well-sounding pretexts. Everywhere now they are seizing the reigns of government in the contemporary Orthodox Local Churches. They are striving to play everywhere the leading guiding role and often they have success, for they skillfully and cunningly make themselves seem to be zealots of Orthodoxy.

But their actual aim is to undermine true Orthodoxy by a false "Orthodoxy," in order to make it come about, in the expression of Christ the Saviour, that the salt has lost its savor (Matthew 5:13), that it might lose its saltiness, that it might lose its spirit and power. This is a special kind of battle against the Church.

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\* Note: from the editors of St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California.



## TOUCHSTONE OF TRUE ORTHODOXY

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Behold of what a frightful undertaking we are the living and immediate witnesses! By all means there is being conducted in the world a frightful battle against the faith of Christ, by a path of falsification and imitations.

And on the background of this truly most frightful and nightmarish phenomenon, something more frightful than open atheism and fighting against God, which threatens to destroy our holy Orthodoxy from the root, having corrupted it from within-against this background, especially brightly shine our true pastors of the Church of Christ who have not sole their souls to the enemies of our holy faith. And among them, of course, in the first rank, is the great all-Russian pastor, Holy Righteous John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt, the tenth anniversary of whose canonization we are celebrating (1974).

And how characteristic it is that only our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has glorified him.\* This glorification has been recognized only by a few individuals in all the other Local Orthodox Churches! And let none of those who do not recognize this glorification as correct and lawful justify himself by some kind of purely formal excuses. The formal side here is totally beside the point. The whole essence of the different attitude to the glorification of our great righteous one lies in the fact that the attitude towards him in our time has become, as it were, a touchstone of the relation to true Orthodoxy, the criterion of the "Orthodoxy" of one person or another.

He who does not love our all-Russian righteous one and does not desire to recognize his glorification in the choir of the saints of the Russian Orthodox Church, by this very fact shows that he does not love Orthodoxy; because the holy righteous John is an authentic Orthodox pastor. He is a living incarnation of Orthodoxy in its power and action.

And it is not for nothing, not at all in vain, that our great righteous one so loved to exclaim: "O wondrous, life-giving, divine Orthodoxy! I behold your bright countenance!" After all, he bore in himself and constantly felt the holy incomparable powers and spiritual might of his wondrous, life-giving, divine Orthodoxy, authentic Orthodoxy, true Orthodoxy, in sharp distinction from all that cunning falsity which even in his days passed itself off for Orthodoxy, without being in actuality such at all.

And it is so in very fact. No matter how much those people who threw our unfortunate homeland into the bloody, abyss of fierce atheism might have blasphemed our great righteous one, and then, even when they came abroad, deserved glory is indisputable and self-evident to any dispassionate and sensible man. But from what source is this grandeur and glory of our wonderous pastor who has acquired world-wide renown? From what source is it?

From holy Orthodoxy.\*\*

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\* Note: Archbishop Averky was one of the three Hierarchs who was at the canonization of St. John of Kronstadt on October 19, 1964.

\*\* Orthodox Word., St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California., 1976, Vol.12, no. 6 (71), November-December., pp. 179-181.



## THE GREAT ECUMENICAL TEACHERS AND FATHERS

Let all who love their words come together and honor with hymns the three great luminaries of the Three-sunned Godhead! Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and renowned John of Golden speech, who have enlightened the world with the rays of their divine doctrines, and are mellifluous rivers of wisdom who have watered all creation with streams of divine knowledge. For they ever intercede with the Trinity for us.\*

With these words Christ's Ecumenical Church glorifies its greatest luminaries -the Great Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom -the memory of each of whom is celebrated singly, but also jointly, on January 30/ February 12th, according to our Orthodox calendar.

This service, to all of them together bears a special, intensely-festive character, thereby underscoring the exclusive importance of these wonderful Hierarchs for our Holy Church, as being "of one temper with the Apostles", as having been similarly to the Apostles, "teachers of the universe." And if we penetrate into their life and works, into the order of Divine Office in their praise, our minds can easily apprehend, and our hearts accept, why it is that our Orthodox faith is called not only "the Apostolic faith," but "the faith of the Fathers," which "confirmed the Creation/Universe" as it is triumphantly proclaimed as on the Day of Orthodoxy.

"The organs of Grace," "lithers of the Spirit," "well celebrated trumpets of preaching," "three preachers of the Great Trinity," "defenders of the Trinity", "shields of righteousness" -with such lofty epithets the Holy Church honors them in its liturgical hymns, maintaining that complete very Apostolic host, as it were, being "three Apostles, after the twelve."

It is as if the Church cannot find praises worthy of them, singing: "With what merits of song shall we crown the heavenly Godbearing in faith, earthly angels, heavenly men"; they are "the staunch defenders of the faith," "the pillars of the Church," "the strength of the faithful", "the comfort of the sinning", "fountains that give off water, of which partaking our souls rejoice"; they are "Arius' vanquishers and defenders of the Orthodox."

Such were these great teachers and fathers of the Ecumenical Council!

And we are fortunate, that not only substantial accounts of their life and activities have come down to us, but also their truly Divinely inspired written works, which, after the books of Holy

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\* Copyright from: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, Mass.



## THE GREAT ECUMENICAL TEACHERS AND FATHERS

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Scripture, should be familiar, frequently read sources for anyone who desires to be a true Christian.

Such were these great teachers and fathers of the Ecumenical Council!

All three lived during the fourth century A.D., which is not underservedly titled the "Golden Age" of Christianity. St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian were almost the same age, and bound together by a great spiritual friendship, which St. Gregory the Theologian recalls most movingly in his works. St. John was their junior by some twenty years. A common ardent fervor united all three in the cause of their great service to the Church of Christ, and of the rescue of believers' souls, for which they attained such fame, earning universal reverence.

St. Basil the Great was born in the year 329, into a family of which several members, for their godliness, were found deserving of inclusion in the host of saints. He obtained his initial education from his parents; notably, it was his mother, St. Emilia, and his grandmother. St. Makrina, who instructed him in the way of God. As a youth, he was sent to Constantinople, where he studied under the celebrated rhetorician Livanius. Thereafter, he received a philosophical education in Athens, where he met and befriended St. Gregory the Theologian. According to the latter, they shared a room and a way of life. They had a common goal, their devotion to each other constantly grew in intensity. "It appeared," writes St. Gregory, "that in us both there was but one exertion practiced-to do good, and but one effort- to strive beyond the worldly (aspire away from the worldly), to live for future blessings. We kept the company of friends, as well, but of chaste, not brazen ones, of the peace-loving, not the riotous. Two roads we knew: one, the first, and by far the superior, led to our sacred temples, and to the teachers within; the other, second to the first, and unequal to it in worth, led to instructors in the external sciences. Other roads-to spectacles, popular gatherings, feasts -we left up to those who sought them."

When Basil returned to his homeland, he was consecrated a reader, and then, together with Gregory, devoted himself to the labors of monastic life, with which he had become familiar when he visited Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. In his own country, he founded several monasteries, and wrote a set of rules (ustav) which have a basic significance for Orthodox monasticism, to this day.

Soon after, the Church, tossed in the storm of Arius' heresies, called both friends-monks to its service. Basil was ordained a deacon, and then, against his will, a priest, in the city of Caesarea. There he gave all of himself to the battle against the Arians and to Christian social work. On the occasion of a funeral, he pronounced such a wonderful discourse, that the wealthy were moved to open the doors of their



## THE GREAT ECUMENICAL TEACHERS AND FATHERS

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granaries to the starving.

In the year 370, Basil was chosen Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Here he sustained an arduous struggle against the Arian heresy, which the Emperor Valens was trying to introduce. As a consequence his overly strenuous labors, and in conjunction with his strict asceticism, his physical strength was so severely undermined, that he did not live to be fifty, being deceased in the year 379. But in spite of such a short life, he left us an immeasurably precious contribution to Patristic literature. There have reached us nine of his discourses for the Hexahemeron, in which he interprets the narrative in the Book of Genesis, about the Creation of the Universe; thirteen discourses on the psalms; and twenty-five discourses for various occasions, in which he brilliantly portrays the deformity of human passions, and inspires revulsion for them in the listeners.

The most precious monument which this great Father left us, is the Order of Divine Liturgy, which is now celebrated ten times a year, and also a series of remarkable prayers, profound in their dogmatic content and elevation of thought and feeling.

The memory of St. Basil the Great is particularly celebrated on January 1/14, the day of his death, jointly with the service of the Lord's Circumcision, and is celebrated with joyous solemnity (alternative: magnificently).

The second of these Great Ecumenical Hierarchs and Teachers, St. Gregory the Theologian, was born in the year 326, and also into a family of great virtue. Even before he had been born, his mother, Nonna, promised to devote him to God, and thereafter raised him accordingly. He received an education exceptional for the time, and became particularly close to St. Basil, while in Athens. By his own admission, he regarded this friendship as one more to his good, than the highest schooling.

Upon his return home, living in the house of his parents, he devoted himself entirely to a strict ascetics' life, feeding on black bread with salt and water, wearing coarse clothing, and submerging himself assiduously into the study of God's Word. But even this life did not satisfy him. Soon he set out for the desert and his friend Basil. Together they prayed, studied, and labored there. "From that time," he himself writes, "I died for the world, and the world for me." However, his father, being already a bishop, and in need of a trusted helper, called his son to his side and ordained him into the priesthood. Soon thereafter, his friend St. Basil, who had by then become Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, with the agreement of St. Gregory's parent, ordained him into the office of Bishop, to the newly opened cathedral of the city of Sasim. His enemies, however, would not admit him there, and he remained vicar to his father until his very death. Having succumbed to a grave illness and being healed of it, he retired to a secluded sanctuary, where he exercised himself for some three years in prayer and fasting.



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But such a great beacon could not long remain concealed. Orthodox bishops and laymen elected him to the throne of the Archbishop of Constantinople. He arrived there at a moment when the Arian domination was strongest, and they had gained control of all the temples. St. Gregory installed himself in the home of his relatives, where small members of the Orthodox began to congregate, in order to hear his discourses. Through his wonderful sermons, outstanding in their profound knowledge of Scripture, in the correctness and authority of their reasoning, in the extraordinary simplicity of their clarifications, in their precise and concise articulation, he began to draw multitudes of listeners, among them not only the Orthodox, but also Arians and even pagans. For his exalted theological teaching on the Holy Trinity, he was given the title "Theologian," in imitation of Christ's beloved disciple, St. John the Theologian.

The room in which he began his preaching, and after that, the church, where he began to conduct services, began to be known as "Anastasia", which signifies "Resurrection." It was hoped, that there would Orthodoxy be resurrected. The choice of name came to be justified. In spite of the mockery and abuse that the Arians showered on St. Gregory, the rocks they threw at him, the assassins they sent after him, the people recognized in him their true shepherd, and began to crowd about him, in the manner of iron drawn to a magnet. With his mighty, spirited gift of speech, the uplifting example of his personal life, and his earnest fervor as a shepherd, he invariably overcame the enemies of the Church, and so, when the Orthodox Emperor Theodosius ascended to the throne, the Arians were expelled from the Churches of Constantinople. Having come into power, the Emperor Theodosius formally confirmed the Holy Father Gregory in the office of Archbishop of Constantinople. The following year, he participated in the work of the Second Ecumenical Council, which condemned the heresy of Macedonius, and he presided over the Council after the death of St. Meletius of Antioch (381 A.D.). However, as a consequence of the dissatisfaction of certain bishops at his election to such a high cathedra in the capital, and the disagreements and debates that subsequently arose, he voluntarily abdicated his position and withdrew to his native town Arianzus, near Nazianzus, where he lived out his days in strict ascetic toils (+ 389 A.D.). He is commemorated by himself on January 25/ February 7, the Church hailing him in its anthems as "the mind most distant," that is to say, the highest, and praising him, that "with his Theologian tongue he destroyed the webs of rhetoricians" and "with vestments of Orthodoxy, woven on high, he beautified the Church."

Many of his written compositions have descended to us. Among them are the forty five sermons of dogmatic and didactic content. Especially important are his lessons, in which the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and its defense from heretics, are laid out. "Of the Holy Trinity," he wrote "I, speak more often that I breathe." His sermons are distinguished by their sacred majesty, spiritual authority, and vibrant inspiration. Many lines from his gifted discourses have been adopted by the hymn writers of the Church into



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the canons and stikhiras for the feasts of Christ's Nativity, Pascha, and Pentecost. All his sermons in general stand out for their clarity, precision, vigour, and imagery, and on this account many called him "the spiritual poet." Having personally experienced the uncertainty of the present life, he depicted its mutability with remarkable skill, in powerful, beautiful strokes, saying that "all here is sorrow for mortals... All is inconstant, that we may preserve in ourselves love for the Constant."

The third member of the "Trinity of Holy Fathers," St. John Chrysostom, was somewhat younger than the first two, but him also the Church reveres no less than them, singing: "the Grace of your lips, like the light of fire, shining forth illuminated Creation." This calls to our mind the words of the Troparion to St. Basil the Great: "Your teaching went forth to all the reaches of the world, as unto the one who received your word..." It is clear from this why it is set down in the Church Rules (ustav) for the same Prokeimen should be sung to these Great Hierarchs that is sung to the Holy Apostles: "Their teaching went forth to all the reaches of the world, and their words to the ends of the universe." For in spirit, strength, and effect of their preaching, they are truly "three Apostles after the twelve," as the Church glorifies them.

St. John Chrysostom was born in the city of Antioch, to parents who were wealthy, high-ranking, and at the same time virtuous. His father Secundus a commanding officer, died when he was still an infant, and his mother, the virtuous Anthusa, remaining a widow at twenty, in spite of her wealth, social standing, and exceptional beauty, did not remarry, but rather devoted herself entirely to the Christian upbringing of her son. She taught him to pray, she herself read to him from the Bible, and in their discourse instructed him in Christian morality, showing him, in her personal life, an exalted example. The brilliant gifts he had from birth John developed by a considerable and thorough education. He studied rhetoric with celebrated pagan orator Livanius. Most characteristic in this pagan's remark about John's mother, Anthusa: "What worthy women one encounters among these Christians!" And when Livanius was asked, whom he would like to see as his successor, he replied with sadness, "John, of course, provided that the Christians don't deprive us of him."

Having become a jurist upon the completion of his education, and gaining renown through his eloquence John quickly became completely disenchanted with secular life, locked himself into his mother's house and devoted himself to the labors of an ascetic: prayer, fasting, and the study of Holy Scripture. Partaking of Holy Baptism at a mature age, as did many in those days who were afraid of committing a grave sin after that great Sacrament, he was ordained a reader. Upon the death of his mother, he spent four years in a secluded retreat near Antioch, and two years in complete isolation and silence, living in a cave. The weakening



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of his health moved him to return to Antioch, where he was ordained a deacon and assigned to the service of the poor. In this manner he acquired that knowledge of all aspects of life, which is so evident in his wonderful sermons. After that, he served as a priest in Antioch over a period of twelve years. Indefatigably he preached, no less than once each week, and sometimes more. His sermons were frequently interrupted by applause of his listeners, to which he usually responded: "What is your applause to me? Improve your way of life and turn to God -there is the greatest praise I can have from you."

In a short time, his fame as a preacher thundered through all the Christian world, and he was given the name: "Chrysostom" -the Golden Lipped- as once a simple woman who had been listening to his sermon called him out loud, in a moment of rapture, before a full Church.

Therefore, when the Patriarch Nektarios of Constantinople died, the Emperor Arkadios himself expressed a wish to see this cathedra presented to John Chrysostom. As it was feared that the inhabitants of Antioch would not allow their beloved shepherd to leave, trickery was resorted to. Asterios, the governor of the East, invited Chrysostom to visit the sites of the martyrs, that lay outside of the city, and a chariot prepared earlier bore him off to Constantinople, where he was installed as Archbishop of the capital.

With his energetic actions towards the uprooting of the remnants of Arianism, the improvement of the clergy and flock, and incessant preaching. St. John Chrysostom gained the devoted love of his flock, here as in Antioch, but also the violent hatred of certain bishops, whom he denounced for their attempts to emulate wealthy potentates in their luxurious life, and of many rich men and ranking courtiers, for his condemnation of their hard-heartedness, licentiousness, and love of luxury combined with disdain for the poor. At the head of all these dissatisfied, the Empress Eudoxia openly placed herself. She was a woman preoccupied with worldly vanities, and grasping, who sensed that Chrysostom's denouncements concerned her, too. Eudoxia drew Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, to her side, and all the bishops who were displeased with St. John united themselves about him. In a place as called the Oak near the capital, they assembled a council, and basing themselves on the most trivial, frequently absurd, and false accusations, condemned St. John to be deposed from his cathedra and banished. "The Church of Jesus Christ did not begin with me, nor will it end with me," → St. John his faithful followers, but on the same night, when hardly he had left the city, a powerful earthquake took place. The Empress, taking fright at the clear sign of God's wrath, made haste to recall the unjustly condemned holy man. However, — since St. John did not cease his attacks on the vices of high society, once again he was condemned to exile, this time without a trial. At first he was banished to Armenia, where he lived for approximately three years in the city of Kukuz, and thereafter was sent to the most remote city of the Empire, Pithiunt, on the shores



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of the Black Sea, three months he was led on foot by rough soldiers, over many mountains, in sweltering heat, and in pouring rain. Along the way, exhausted by the long journey and cruel treatment of the soldiers, he stopped in the city Komanakh. The holy martyr St. Basilisk, whose remains repose in that city, appeared to him at night saying, "Take heart, brother John, tomorrow we will be together." After receiving the Communion of the Holy Mysteries, St. John surrendered his righteous soul to God, with these momentous words: "Glory be to God for everything!" It was the 14th of September, 407 A.D.

In this manner was the last and greatest of the Beatitudes, given by Christ the Saviour in the Sermon of the Mount, borne out and realized in St. John: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (St. Matthew 5:11). A great consolation is this to all who are persecuted for God's Truth!

St. John Chrysostom left us a literary inheritance greater than that of any of the other Great Church Fathers -all in all, twelve volumes of his spiritual works, or approximately 12,000 printed pages in modern editions.

In all ages, St. Chrysostomos was revered by everyone, and is still now revered, as the unsurpassed most excellent paradigm for those who preach. He spoke, for the most part, extemporaneously, but, nevertheless, 800 of his recorded sermons have reached us. In them we find interpreted almost all the Holy Scripture of the New Testament, and many places from the Old Testament. The sermons of St. Chrysostom are of a morally practical character: they set as their aim the sinner and his confirmation in Christian virtue. In them can be sensed the spirit of his sincere, fatherly love for those he shepherded; they are free from any artificiality, are very lively and convincing. Their language is one of unusual simplicity, clarity, and accessibility to understanding. The sermons of St. John Chrysostom are not exercises in the rhetorical art, but rather the chief means of instructing the flock. Because of this, they have the closest possible relation to the life of the hearers. He tries to use all the circumstances of that life, in order to call them to repentance and guide them on the path of righteousness. In this regard he revealed great determination, frequently repeating the same lesson until he noticed signs of improvement, on which occasion, a veritable father, he would express his joy.

The most remarkable monument of his Archbishop's service comes to us in the "Order of Divine Liturgy" that bears his name-Liturgy that is celebrated almost daily throughout the entire year of Service, with the exception of certain days. He also left us separate prayers.

The most wonderful of his discourses and creation are "The Book of Chastity," "Six Pronouncements on the Priesthood," which portray the ideal shepherd, twelve discourses "Against the Anomians," eight "Discourses against the Hebrews," discourse



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on prayer, on charity, on public amusements, "Against Those Who Attend the Theatres," "Proclamation on Holy Pascha" which we invariably read at the end of Paschal matins, "In praise of the Apostle St. Paul," "Discourse in Praise of all the Holy Martyrs," the parting sermon before his banishment, and also many others.

→ One such cursive survey alone of the life and activity of these three Great Hierarchs already explains to us, why our Holy Church glorifies them with such lofty praises, singing:

"MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL, THREE GREAT LIGHTS AMONG THE HIERARCHS:

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL, THE TRIPLE BRILLIANCE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST:

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL, THOSE WHO ENLIGHTENED THE CHURCH OF CHRIST:

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL, THE THREE SHEPHERDS OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY:

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL, THREE GREAT BEACONS OF THE TRIPLE SUN:

REJOICE, TRINITY OF FATHERS, GREAT SHIELDS OF THE CHURCH, PILLARS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, CONFIRMATION OF THE FAITHFUL, DOWNFALL OF THE HERETICS, WHO HAVE SHEPHERDED CHRIST'S PEOPLE WITH DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS, AND CULTIVATED THEM WITH VARIED VIRTUES, BRIGHT PROFESSORS OF GRACE, ELABORATED THE LAWS TO BE FULFILLED IN CHRIST, GUIDES TO THE HEAVENS, GATES OF PARADISE, PRAY FOR CHRIST TO BESTOW GREAT MERCY UPON OUR SOULS."

And since each of these three great Ecumenical teachers and Hierarchs had his own particular worshippers and imitators, on which grounds even quarrels, divisions, and feuds began to occur among the Christians of succeeding centuries, some calling themselves Basilians, others, Gregorians, and still others Johannites, the Holy Fathers themselves quelled these disagreements. Together they appeared to John, Bishop of Euchait (Ebxaut) and revealed to him that they all have one equal merit before God. "And so proclaim," they said, "for Christians to abandon their unnecessary discord. As in our life time we labored for a unity of spirit, so after our decease we most of all desire a unity of thought among the faithful: establish a single feast-day for us all."

And so then, in the year 1076, on January 30th/February 12th, the Church established one single celebration in honour of the three Holy Ecumenical teachers and Fathers, insofar as they are all "the three highest followers and servants of the Trinity, a triple-edged sword of Grace."

And they are all a great example and a model to be imitated, for all succeeding Hierarchs of the Holy Orthodox Christian Church. And, by God's mercy, there have been in the past not a few worthy imitators of these great hierarchs, who strove



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to walk in their footsteps. As for our time, these great Fathers, in their life and deeds, prove to be but silent reproach and accusation for many contemporary hierarchs. For today, in place of sincere belief, fervent preservation of pure Orthodoxy, and service to the true Church that is unselfish to the point of self-denial, many had set modernism, ecumenism, opportunism; instead of pleasing God, of service to God and Church-pleasing mankind, service to the powerful of this world and to human weakness. Those who remain silent on this cause, and try to "walk apace with time" are denounced by the Great Hierarch St. Gregory the Theologian, who said, "with silence is God betrayed." And this is the brightest sign of the "Departure" that has begun. Lord, save us from this evil time!\*



THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS  
ST. BASIL THE GREAT,  
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM,  
AND ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN

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\* Translated from: Orthodox Russia, by Miss Maria Belaeff., Issue No. 2., 1975., pp. 3-6., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.



ESPECIALLY INSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS FROM THE LIVES  
OF THE THREE GREAT HIERARCHS

For almost the whole time of his episcopal service St. Basil the Great endured a cruel fight with the heretical arians, who acquired great power under the Emperor Constantine and even more so under the Emperor Valens. In the battle against the arians, St. Basil continued the work of St. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, and, like him, was elevated above all others as an unshakable pillar of Orthodoxy. And so the Emperor Valens was persuaded that if the firmness of St. Basil could be broken, arianism would finally triumph. Then Valens sent the perfect Modestus, who was well-known for his cruelty in persecuting the Orthodox, to St. Basil in Caesarea. The haughty prefect began tempting St. Basil with the promise of various royal favors if he would enter into communion with the arianizing bishops; but when he saw his unshaken firmness and unwillingness to compromise, he switched to threats and began threatening him with loss of property, exile, and even death. To all these threats the saintly bishop courageously replied:

"I am not afraid of exile for 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' (Ps. 33:1); it is impossible to take away the property of one who has nothing; for me death is a blessing, for it will unite me with Christ for Whom I live and labor."

The saint's majesty startled the prefect. "No one has ever before spoken to me as you have," he remarked.

"You probably have never had the occasion to speak with a bishop," St. Basil modestly replied.

With all his modesty and profound, truly Christian humility, St. Basil surrounded the divine services which he performed with a genuinely royal majesty and beauty which was at the same time united with an intense, prayerful piety which struck even the king, who had a hostile attitude toward Orthodoxy, when he was in Caesarea and visited the church where St. Basil was serving.

The great ascetic and man of prayer, St. Ephraim the Syrian, testifies to the same thing. When he came to the church where St. Basil was serving and preaching, he was so taken by admiration and spiritual excitement over everything he saw and heard that he expressed his feelings out loud in his native Syrian language. St. Basil sent his altar server to bring him to himself into the altar, and he called him by name, which revealed the great holy bishop's perspicacity. This was the beginning of their further friendly relations.

St. Gregory the Theologian, as Archbishop of Constantinople, fearlessly and energetically fought with the heretical arians. But when disputes and disagreements arose at the Second Ecumenical Council because of him as a result of dissatisfaction with his selection on the part of several bishops, and when these disagreements did not stop, he stooped up ~~in~~



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in the midst of the council and said, "Men and pastors! I am not better than the prophet Jonah; throw me into the sea too, just so the disputes cease!" And no matter how much his many admirers tried to dissuade him, he remained firm in his decision to give up the see of Constantinople. "Give me rest," he said, "from my long-lasting labors, show respect to these gray hairs, honor my wanderings, and bring into my place someone else who will be able to please you in all things and bear the burdens of the church, for the present time especially demands such pastors.... I am tired of hearing criticism of my meekness; I am tired of squabbling with words and with envy, with enemies and with my own flock"..... "Perhaps they will also criticize me (as they already have) for not having a rich table, nor clothes appropriate to my rank, nor solemn processions, nor majesty in my bearing. I did not know that I would have to compete with consuls, governors of provinces, and the most prominent military leaders who do not know where to spend their wealth; that I would be expected to live in luxury from the inheritance of the poor. I did not know that I would be expected to ride on excellent horses, brilliantly shine forth in a carriage, that there should be meetings and receptions full of servility for me, that everyone would have to make way for me and fall back before me as soon as they saw me coming even a long way off. If this simplicity of mine was a burden to you, forgive me for it: it is now at an end. Place over yourselves someone else who will satisfy the people and give me the desert, country life, and God; He is the only One I please by the simplicity of my life. So for the sake of the Very Trinity Whom you and I both honor, for the sake of our common hope and the Church, grant me this mercy and release me with prayers...."

And he left, this great, humble bishop, who had so labored and one so much for the Church, leaving to all his testament: "Children, 'keep the traditions!'" (I Tim. 6:20).

After taking leave of everyone, to the great distress of the king and people, the great saint first of all set out for Caesarea where he pronounced his remarkable funeral sermon for St. Basil the Great. This is how he characterized St. Basil:

"O light-bearing Basil, praise of Caesarea! Your word is thunder; your life, lightning. But you too left your sacred see! Christ thus was pleased as soon as possible to unite you to the hosts of inhabitants of heaven."

"The whole world, the possession of the isodynamic Trinity, has been adnormally shaken by conflicting teachings. And Basil's lips -alas! alas! -are closed in silence. Awake, Basil, and halt the storm with your word and your sacred actions. For you alone showed us as life is equal to teaching, so also teaching is equal to life..."

"There is one God reigning on high; and our age has seen one worthy Bishop. That is you, Basil, thundering proclaimer of the truth, bright eye of Christians!" "You did



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not breathe much on earth, but you brought everything and presented it to Christ as a gift: soul and body, words and hands, O Basil, great glory of Christ, support of priests, support of the truth which people now are trying above all to cut out.

And here is the extremely important testament which St. Gregory the Theologian left us; it is especially appropriate to our times, which are much more terrible than all the heretical eras of the past, since it is a time of almost total Apostasy with practically no exceptions:

"There is a fine disagreement, just as there is the most destructive agreement. But one must love the good peace which has a good goal and which unites one with God... But when it is a case of obvious dishonor, then one must rather accept fire and sword, paying no attention to the demands of the age and of leaders (I dare to say: not only of secular, but of ecclesiastical leaders) and of anything at all, than to share in the leaven of wickedness and to join the infected. The most terrible thing of all is to fear anything more than God and as a result of this fear for a servant of the truth to become a betrayer of the teaching of faith and truth."

In the life of St. John Chrysostom the most instructive thing for us is that he too, like the first two of the glorious "Trinity of holy hierarchs," began his blessed and very fruitful service to Christ's Church with the ascetic feats of a strict monastic life. This alone should serve as a strong refutation of the conclusions of the enemies of monasticism (of whom there are more than a few) who are not at all willing to recognize the great spiritual advantage of monasticism and who especially rage against the long-established custom of selecting candidates for service as bishops from among the monks, being unwilling to reconcile themselves to this and trying in every way possible to prove that it is incorrect and inadmissible. The lives of all these three great hierarchs serve as a clear and eloquent refutation of their conclusions.

Before his ordination as a deacon St. John Chrysostom spent four years in a strict monastic establishment, and then lived two more years as a hermit in an isolated cave, which prepared him spiritually for the great service which lay before him.

After being made a priest, St. John began preaching tirelessly not just each week, but even two or three times a week, and at times even every day, castigating faults and calling to repentance. The people of Antioch were especially struck by the fact that St. John did not read his sermons, but preached them from the fulness of his heart; no one had ever preached like this before him. Thanks to this such grace poured forth from his lips that those who heard him could not help being amazed and being filled by his conversations. Stenographers appeared to write down his inspired words and give or sell them to the many people who wanted them. Many people then read them themselves at home and even learned them by heart.



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St. John Chrysostom, as a true pastor who lays down his life for his sheep, comforted the people of Antioch when they realized the madness of their actions in revolting against their emperor and destroying the imperial statues; he became a leader of the assembly of clergy who begged the emperor's agents to forgive the guilty people. And the emperor, whom Bishop Flavian approached for the same purpose, was inclined to forgive them. St. Chrysostom on this occasion preached his enthusiastic sermon calling on his flock to thank God and never to forget this terrible experience so that they never again would permit the repetition of anything of the kind.

One can say that St. John never ignored a single outstanding event in the life of his flock and always presented his inspired sermons in which he evaluated everything from the standpoint of the Word of God, and thus all his sermons had a deeply vital character and touched the hearts of everyone. And thus he was a true pastor of his flock.

He strongly criticized impious behavior in church. "Can one say," he once said, "that the church has become a theater? Women come here who are dressed more improperly and immodestly than are those who engage in debauchery there. And they attract immodest men here after them. If someone wants to seduce a woman, I think no place seems as convenient to him as the church; and if someone has to buy or sell something, the church seems to him more convenient than the public square. There is gossiping here, here more gossip can be heard than anywhere else, and if you want to know the news, you will find it out here better than in the court room or doctors' offices... Is this tolerable? Can we stand this? Every day I suffer and wear myself out so that you will take away from here some useful instruction, but you leave with more harm than good". \*

How much this reminds us of our time, but do many pastors take all these outrages so much to heart and speak of them in sermons?

As a preacher not only of criticism, but also of mercy to the repentant, St. Chrysostom was a pastor of peace. His heart was grieved over any sort of discord, division, and schism, and taught thus, "Nothing introduces divisions into the Church like love of authority. Nothing so arouses God's anger as do divisions in the Church. Even if we were to do the most perfect deeds, but while destroying unity, we will be punished just as if we had torn a sin". -And he tirelessly called everyone to repent: "if you sin every day, then repent every day too... You have grown old in your sins -renew yourself by repentance! But is it possible, you ask, to attain salvation by repenting? -Of course it is possible! For God's mercy is immeasurable and His goodness indescribable." \*\*

St. John did not change at all when he assumed the exalted see of the Archbishop of Constantinople; he remained completely foreign to flattery and pleasing those in power and

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\* Sermon 36 on I Corinthians.

\*\* Sermon 8:1 On Repentance.

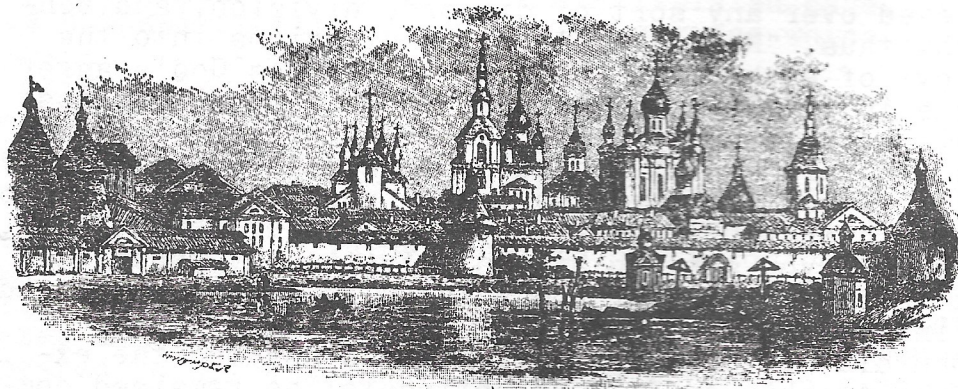


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thought only of saving the souls of the flock entrusted to his care. Here too he continued tirelessly preaching and castigating with his strong words the passions and faults of people, not omitting those the high society and the clergy who imitated the luxurious and pointless life of the prominent royal courtiers and wealthy men, and even the Empress Eudoxia herself. And he showed himself worthy of his calling, not being afraid to suffer for it and lose his exalted see. In the end this led to his unjust condemnation by his false brothers, the bishops who hated him for being a silent reproach to them all by his strict ascetic life; they felt, too, that his fiery denunciations touched them too. They especially hated him when, in view of many complaints, he traveled to Asis Minor and, when he had become convinced on the spot of the extreme disarray in church affairs because of the unworthiness of the local bishops, he deposed several of them who had been caught in simony and unworthy personal lives. There was also dissatisfaction with St. Chrysostom from those hypocritical monks who, far from angelic ends and who lived lazy lives, not in monasteries, but in various cities and even in the capital. The false monks denounced the Archbishop in every possible way, calling him proud, hard, cruel, and arrogant. This backbiting was not slow to lead to slander, and many dissatisfied people began spreading all sorts of humiliating nonsense about the great saint. But the most dissatisfied with him of all were the women of the capital's high society who found in him an implacable critic of their idle and dissolute life; their number included the Empress Eudoxia herself, who accomplished his condemnation, deposition from his see, and exile. -With great humility the great saint set out for his underserved exile and committed his righteous soul to God with words of thanks to God: "Glory to God for everything!"

Are there in our evil and perfidious time many such pious, firm, uncompromising, and honorable pastors and archpastors like these great universal teachers and bishops who should serve as a model for everyone? \*



\* Translated from the Russian, by Father Deacon Seraphim Johnson., Orthodox Russia., Issue No. 2. 1976., p. 7-8., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.



FOR WHAT PURPOSE WAS THE CHURCH  
FOUNDED AND EXISTS?

(A REMINDER FOR EVERYONE WHO CONSIDERS  
HIMSELF AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN)

Many people in our time, even among those who regard themselves as Orthodox Christians, do not comprehend, to their misfortune, the purpose for which the Church was founded by Christ our Saviour, and cannot lucidly account for its existence.

The Church is not in any respect an ordinary human organization, similar to others.

The Church is not a "people's democracy" that can unite within its bounds those people who are, to a greater or lesser extent, alienated from the true faith in God and from Christian morality.

The Church is not an arena for the struggle for power, nor any other political or partisan struggle, in which the opponents, for the most part, are governed by their pride or vanity, by their ambition to "play a role" or to obtain some sort of profit or reward for themselves, through their persistent striving.

The Church exists not for the mutual antagonism of those who seek honour and prominence, nor for partisan squabbles, not for the sowing of enmity, intrigue, calumny, and slander, not for the earning of scores.

The single purpose to which the Church is founded, not by people, but by our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, who is the salvation of souls unto life eternal, through prayer, through communion with the Sacraments of the Church, by the agency of which the faithful are offered and saving grace of the Holy Spirit, and through the fervent and assiduous observance of all the soul-saving determinations of the Church.

In this way, and only by keeping this perspective in mind, ought we to approach the participation of the faithful laity in matters of Church government, as was approved by the All-Russian Council of the Church in 1917-1918, and certainly with no attitude, in the name of any "democratic" principles whatsoever.

In Christ's Church, founded and invisibly guided by the Divine Founder Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, there is not, and cannot be a place for any kind of "democracy", which is entirely alien to the cause most important to men - the saving of the soul; alien to the true faith in God; alien to Christian morality; "democracy" - in which all is based on the struggle of parties, on personal ambitions, on the frenzied fight between egos and ambitions that will not hesitate before any means, even the most immoral, to dirty its antagonists and to brazenly slander them, and on uninspired formalism, where victory belongs to the purely formalistic 'majority of votes,' by far not always honestly tallied and by far not always responsive to truth, to the will and veritable good of the people.



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It is for this reason that the elections of office-holding individuals in the Church, those who must assist the parish priest in the management of Church affairs, can in no way be interpreted as the introduction of democratic principals. Respecting the elections into the Church Parish Council, that they are not to take place according to the democratic principle of a formal "majority of votes," the "Introduction to the Parish Rules," compiled at the All-Russian Council of the Church (7/20 April 1918), addresses itself to the faithful clearly and convincingly.

The "Introduction" opens with precisely the words that make clear, how that book of "Rules" (ustav) is to be regarded: "The purpose of Christian life is the salvation of the soul unto life eternal.

"For Christians, the inspiring source is their faith in Christ, the Son of God, who became a man for the sake of our salvation. Such inspiration derived from the faith reveals itself equally in the attitude of Christian occupied with their salvation, as in the corresponding life they lead, and their relations among themselves. Filled with a single spirit of belief, it is natural that Christians fulfil in themselves the testament of the Saviour Christ about the unity of those who believe in Him, imitating the model of the unity of the Most Holy Trinity. As in the Holy Trinity there is the single life of the Divine essence, so in the multitude of Christians being saved is the single life of the One, belief in whom inspires them all."

The members of the Church Parish Council are chosen not in order to regard themselves haughtily as the "proprietors" of the parish, to give out orders and manipulate, nourishing their pride and vanity, but to bear humbly the obedience giving to them, to be the closest assistants and collaborators of their shepherd in his blessed shepherd's work, which is devoted to no other cause, then the parish souls salvation.

The "Introduction to the Parish Rules" is very clear and direct on this point.

The best people of the parish should be chosen-best in the sense of their steadfast desire to help the shepherd lovingly in his constructive toils-in the building of a parish life, both spiritually and materially. They are certainly not chosen to boast before others, priding themselves in their election, but to toil and labor, with humility and abnegation, for the good of the parish.

Those who do not regularly attend Divine Services, do not confess their sins, do not partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, do not solicit the blessings of the Church for all the most important steps in their personal life, and do not generally live a spiritually life, even more so, those who succumb to what are readily apparent passions and vices, must not be chosen, for these people are strangers to the Church, and cannot therefore work with pure favor towards the spiritual good and actual benefits of the parish. They who usually act in this matter are the ones who cause the discord, the quarrels and mutines in the



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parish, in their pursuit of some obscure personal goals, disrupting the peaceful flow of parish life, and interfering with the tranquility of others prayer and search for salvation-in other words, destroying the fundamental purpose for which a parish exists.

How then are the elections of parish officials to be conducted reasonably and fruitfully?

This is what the "Introduction to the Parish Rules" says, word for word: "The shepherd (parish-priest) cannot approach the execution of the Rules regarding an Orthodox parish, without having previously prepared at least several parishioners for a conscientious and active participation in the given cause. Undoubtedly, every shepherd has in his parish cause, and to the recruitment of others like them. Thus are great and small groups of earnest, concerned parties gradually created in a parish. They will be the closest assistants to the shepherd; they will realize his undertakings in the parish. After this manner, will be prepared, gradually and intelligently, elections to the Parish Council and other parish duties, that are not blind and incidental, but mindful of the cause to be served."

We stress here that these parishioners are elected not to dominate, but to serve!

The "Introduction" continues: "Only after such attentive preparation will it be possible to begin to effect the "Rules for the Orthodox Parish" that was adopted by the Church Council. The most virtuous and hard-working individuals of the parish are chosen to take charge of the parish affairs, but besides them such earnest workers should be chosen as might be useful in the close supervision of some area or toher in the parish. One might take charge of education (school and missionary work), another of charity causes, a third supervises the youth, someone else supervises the propaganda of sects, yet another-the upbringing of children, and so on. Futhermore, the facilitate of the supervision to specific parishioners for supervision and management. In this manner, the parish priest difficult and noble duty of shepherd will be administered with the assistance of the parishioners themselves."

That is the proper nature of the laity's spiritual activity in the parish as a whole!

As for those who adopt membership in the parish not with the aim of saving their souls and helping others to do likewise, cooperating with their shepherd, as "the actual spiritual instructor and father of his flock," but instead with the intention of "playing a role," growing in self-praise and arrogance, sousing squabbles and mutiny, they should not be admitted to election for parish duties, until they should improve for the better, demonstrating their faith and the good direction of their will.

In the Church, which is a Divine institution, there can be no room for any personal ambitions, nor any personally profitable aspirations or considerations.



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Here is what the "Introduction to the Parish Rules" says of this, citing the cautioning words of the Holy Apostle St. Paul:

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, or exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:3,6-8).

"Therefore, in an Orthodox parish, the shepherds, having received grace through their bishop, should be responsible directors and providers of all the parish life. Under their guidance, the remaining clerics and shepherded flock should, to the extent of their God-given abilities and the "obedience" giving to them, cooperate in the fitting out of the parish for the most suitable achievement of the salvation of the souls of each each and every Christian parishioner.

Such is the essence and purpose of our Saviours Church; such is the Church-based as an arrangement of an Orthodox parish, as of a small Church of Christians being saved. From this aspect should all the determinations concerning the creation of an Orthodox parish be examined."

It should be clear from this, that it is inadmissible to elect such persons to parish functions, who tormented by their pride, arrogantly and superciliously, on the sole basis of their own personal suspicions, and prejudices who self-confidently appoint themselves the merciless and intractable judges, not only of their parish brethren, but of the shepherds themselves -especially of the good shepherds, who effectively "lay down their lives for their sheep," devoting themselves wholly to prayer, virtuous deeds, and who work for the good of the parish and the salvation of the souls of the faithful. Bullies of the kind who imagine that they possess the rights of a higher court, which right belongs to God above, who knows what is hidden, ought not to be admitted to the management of Church affairs, for such people are not builders, but rather deolishers of the life of Church and parish.

And all members of the parish, shepherds and laity equally, must remember, that Christ our Saviour entrusted His Church into the care and management of the Apostles and their lawful inheritors-the Bishops-and that the parish shepherds-priest are only parish "deputies" of the biscopal authority and dare not initiate any action without their Bishop's blessings.

According to the sacred canons of our Holy Church, the totality of authority in each diocese belongs to the local Bishop of that diocese, and no one has the right to interfere with parish affairs in his diocese, if not through him and with his consent.



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Here is how this momentous "Introduction to the Parish Rules" concludes:

"But both shepherds and flock, that they may remain under the grace-filled leadership of Christ Himself in His Church, should remember the utterance of the Holy Father Cyprian of Carthage: The Bishop is in the Church, and the Church is in the Bishop, and if someone is not with the Bishop, then he is outside the Church." \*



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\* Translated from: Orthodox Russia, by Miss Maria Belaeff.  
Issue No. 4., 1976., pp. 3-4., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy  
Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.



## WHY CHRISTIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ARRANGE AMUSEMENTS ON THE EVES OF SUNDAYS AND FEAST DAYS

How strange and painful it is for modern Christians that many of them do not understand the full blameworthiness of arranging amusements on Saturday nights! How can one talk about Christianity or the Christianization of life if such a simple, seemingly obvious truth does not get through to the consciousness of the representatives of modern atheistic and unchurched society. For those who are still capable of learning, we offer the following historical note.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5) -this is how far back into antiquity- to the first day of the creation of the world-one can trace the origin of the Church's custom of considering the next day to begin with the evening of the day before. Of just as ancient an origin are our holidays which the Lord Himself, the Creator of the world and of man, commanded us to "sanctify": "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:3). This "seventh day", sanctified by God Himself at the dawn of human history, was again commanded to be kept holy 1600 years before Christ's birth on the solemn day of the giving of the law at Sinai. This command made up the special fourth commandment of the Law of God, proclaimed in this way: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:8-10). The sanctity of this seventh day-the sabbath in the Old Testament, the celebration of which always began from the evening of the preceding day, was protected by fear of death: "You shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 31:14).

In place of the Old Testament sabbath, in the New Testament the day following the sabbath, the "Day of the Lord" or the "day of resurrection", came to be celebrated by the Christians, because in that day the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead and, having conquered hell, freed us from the power of the devil and eternal death. The beginning of its observation, as is testified to by the Sacred Scriptures and the most ancient monuments of Christian literature, goes back to the first days of Christianity. For us Christians this day is a day of bright joy, of paschal joy, the Pascha of the Lord which we celebrated weekly. For in this day the Lord appeared to His disciples assembled together, and "the disciples were glad, when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). "After eight days," i.e. once again in the very same day of the week, the Apostles again were assembled together, and again the Lord appeared to them, renewing their joy (John 20:26). Seven weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, which occurred again on the same day, the Apostles, following an already established custom, assembled for prayer in the upper room on Zion, and this day became for them the day of a glorious new triumph: the Lord sent down on them the Holy Spirit, Who from that time has constantly abided in the Church (Acts 2:1-4). From that time, as is clearly seen in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the "day of the Lord" became an especially honored day for all Christians. Following the example of the Old Testament sabbath and because, according



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to the Church's belief, the Lord rose at midnight, the celebration of that day began on Saturday evening, continued all night, and was completed in the morning by the "breaking of bread," i.e. by performing the greatest Christian mystery, the Eucharist, by Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ (Acts 20:7-11), which was received by all the faithful who were present. It is from this that our public Divine service which is called the "all-night vigil" took its origin; it should last the whole night from Saturday to Sunday and it is only because of our laziness and carelessness that it is now being shortened more and more. We find indications of such a public night prayer of the Christians even in the Acts of the Holy Apostles. Thus, when they were locked in prison the Apostles Paul and Silas praised God at midnight (Acts 16:25). The whole first Christian community in Jerusalem assembled at night for prayer (Acts 12:12). The Christian community in Troas assembled on "the first day of the week", i.e. on Sunday, for prayer in the evening and spent the whole night "until dawn" in prayer and hearing the instruction of the holy Apostle Paul, completing this prayer assembly with the "breaking of bread," i.e. communion of the Body and Blood of Christ (Acts 20:7-11). Such ancient monuments of Christian literature as the Epistle of St. Barnabas, the epistles of St. Ignatius the God-Bearer, the works of St. Justin the Philosopher, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Melito of Sardis, and many others also speak of this celebration of Sunday. The great father of the Church St. John Chrysostom and the very famous teacher Origen unanimously testify that all-night vigils on the eve of Sundays trace their origin from the time of the Apostles and were established by the holy Apostles themselves. Also worthy of note is the non-Christian testimony which has come to us - the well-known letter of the pro-consul of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, to the Emperor Trajan. In it Pliny writes that the Christians assemble in the established day, before sunset, and sing hymns to Christ as God. According to the testimony of many holy Fathers and Christian writers of the first centuries of Christianity, all-night vigils were not held just on the eve of Sundays, but also on the eve of feasts of the Lord and Mother of God, and of days dedicated to the memory of the holy martyrs. We find clear indications of the contents of these all-night vigils in the book of Apostolic Constitutions (19th chapter of book V). "From the evening until the cock crows," it says, "remain in watching, prayer, and supplications to God, reading until cock-crow the law, the prophets, and psalms, and after reading the Gospel, offer the people a sermon." St. Cassian and St. Basil the Great testify that the all-night vigil included the night and morning service and ended "after cockcrow."

That is how the first Christians met Sundays and feast days. For them the night before Sunday, the night before a feast was a holy night, the whole of which they spent in prayer, preparing themselves to receive the great mystery of communion of the Body and Blood of Christ in the morning. In this night-time prayerful preparation and in them performing the Divine Liturgy in the morning there was, in fact, contained the cele-



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bration of the given memorial day sanctified by the Church.

Can one then after this consider the person a Christian who spends the holy night before a feast of the given memorial day sanctified by the Church.

Of course not, for such a person, by breaking his communion in prayer with the Church on this holy night, thereby voluntarily cuts himself off from the body of the Church. This is why in the past those who missed three Sunday services in a row without a serious reason were completely excommunicated from the Church as worthless, dead members. It is thus even more inadmissible for Christians to organize on this holy night parties and amusements which are in their very essence improper and out of place at a time when the thoughts and hearts of Christians should be directed toward God. Besides the fact that they might distract Christians from attending the services of the feasts, the act of organizing them itself in these days and hours which are sacred for Christians is insulting to a believing conscience and is a blasphemous outrage in its canonical rules, which are obligatory for all Christians, strictly forbids any sort of public entertainment and popular amusements in those days when they would interfere with attendance at holidays divine services.\*

There are few who know that in earlier, pre-revolutionary Russia the sanctity of Sundays and holy days was protected not only by ecclesiastical, but also by civil laws. Thus in 1627 a decree of Tsar Michael Theodorovich Romanov was issued which forbade, under the threat of the whip, attendance at popular entertainments. Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich fought even more energetically against these festival amusements which penetrated more and more into us from the West. In 1648 he issued a special ukase forbidding "any sort of drunkenness and any sort of restless, diabolical activity, mockery and buffoonery and any sort of diabolical games" on Sundays; in place of this the ukase orders going to Church for Vespers, Matins, and Liturgy and "standing here humbly and with all piety." Those who disobey are commanded to be "beaten mercilessly with rods" and even to be exiled. In 1652 the tsar issued a new ukase forbidding the sale of wine on Sundays during the whole year. The 26th article of the famous "Code" of 1648 is noteworthy: the laws which protect the sanctity of Sunday refer in it to the period of time beginning on Saturday three hours before the beginning of evening. Emperor Peter I, famous for his homage to the West, who introduced among us in Russia wordly amusements on the western model (the so-called "assemblies"), nonetheless by a special decree did not permit organizing them earlier than the end of Liturgy on Sunday. On February 17, 1718 he also issued a decree obliging all people on Sundays to attend Vespers, Matins, and especially Liturgy. By a decree in 1743 Empress Elizabeth Petrovna forbade the opening of taverns on Sundays before the conclusion of Liturgy. Emperor Paul I in a decree of October 22, 1796 forbade theatrical performances "on all Saturdays," while by a decree of 1799 the sale of alcoholic beverages was forbidden during the times of Divine services. In 1833 under the Emperor Nicholas I through the efforts of the famous Speranskiy, the "Codex of Laws

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\* Canon 66 of the VI Ecumenical Council, Canon 72 of the Council of Carthage.



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of the Russian Empire" was compiled, in the XIVth volume of which there is a special article on preserving the sanctity of Sundays. The laws dealing with Sunday are presented here in the following form: Sundays should be devoted to "rest from labor and godly piety." The law advises avoiding dissolute living on these days and going to church to Divine services. Along with this, the civil power took upon itself the responsibility of seeing to the preservation of order, quiet, and peace during Divine services, both in the church and around it. Public houses could be opened after Liturgy. This law decisively forbids any sort of entertainment, music, theatrical presentations, and any other public amusements and games before the conclusion of the Sunday Liturgy. By a special decree of September 21, 1881 Emperor Paul I's prohibition was again confirmed against organizing theatrical performances and presentations "on all Saturdays," with the exception of dramatic presentations in foreign languages (there was, of course, a concession to foreigners here).

From everything that has been said above it is quite clear that even the civil laws of former Imperial Russia required the faithful to meet feast days in prayer and piety, and if this was not done in some places, it was precisely as a result of that decline in faith, that scandalous instability of minds and hearts which finally led out homeland to all the horrors of blood-thirsty, atheistic communism. And the atheist communists now intentionally organize all sorts of spectacles and entertainments at the time of festival services and even on the night of Pascha itself so as to draw the people away from attending church.

How can we here abroad not be ashamed to imitate the atheist communists in their efforts to draw the faithful away from attending feast-day services?

Is it really not yet clear to us by this time that Russia was destroyed because we too blindly followed after every sort of self-proclaimed "leader" and "teacher" who inspired us with the spirit of imaginary "freedom" and of disobedience to our Mother, the Holy Church, and her saving institutions.

Whoever wants to "free" himself from obedience to the Church is digging himself a pit of perdition with his own hands. It is time to understand this and to open our eyes at least now, when the whole world, having gone too far in its opposition to the genuine Church of Christ, finds itself at the edge of a frightening abyss, ready to swallow it up! \*

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\* Translated by Father Deacon Seraphim Johnson., The Present Times in the Light of God's Word: Sermons and Speeches., Vol. I., pp. 59-63., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.



THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
ON EARTH:  
PROGRESS OR THE CROSS?

On August 1, according to our Orthodox ecclesiastical calendar, our Holy Church begins the celebration of the Precious and Life-creating Cross of the Lord, which reaches its climax on September 14, the great feast of the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord, and concludes with the Leave-taking (Apodosi) of the feast on September 21.

Why is this? Is it not enough that we commemorate the Crucifixion of the Lord on the Cross on Great Friday, and that the Holy Church glorifies the Cross of the Lord every Friday?

A profound, inner meaning is concealed in this celebration of the Cross of the Lord: the Holy Church, our concerned mother, wishes to direct our particular attention to this great and saving sign, against which the world, "which lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19), has always waged, and in our days continues to wage, a deliberate and unrelenting battle-the world which has now plainly fallen away from Christ and is preparing itself to worship Antichrist.

Can anyone dare call himself a Christian who shuts his eyes to all the horrors taking place in the world today, and soothes his conscience, and the consciences of those around him, with assurances that everything is an incidental, transient phenomenon, and that in general the world is moving towards "progress," towards the establishment of the "Kingdom of God on earth"?

It is frightening to think that we are hearing such assurances more and more often in our days, not only from non-believers, not only from the sectarians who are "chiliasts" (those whose doctrine includes belief in a thousand-years kingdom on earth), but even from certain Orthodox clerics, including some who bear the rank of bishop!

It is difficult to say what these people believe who have apparently been appointed to instruct the people in the pure teaching of the Word of God and the holy Fathers of the Church, and why they are so disposed, marching to the tune of the sectarians at times, and at other times with those who do not believe in God and with the "Christian progressives." Either they are naive in the extreme and completely ignorant of the clear teaching of the word of God, or they themselves do not believe in anything, but say that which is required of them by the overlords who provide for them, whom they faithfully serve, fearing to lose those worldly goods received from them: money, titles, jobs, high rank in society, pleasures, etc.

The word of God does not give us even the slightest foundation for belief in the establishment of a "Kingdom of God on earth," or in any worldly progress for humanity; quite the contrary. It foretells much suffering for true followers of Christ and the "bearing of the cross" in imitation and following of the Lord Who bore the Cross; and for this world, which lieth in wickedness, it foretells an inevitable end. The promised "Kingdom of Christ on earth" is by no means tangible, but noetic-within the souls of those who truly believe in Christ, for Whom the Lord became King.

Surely it is not in vain that, laying down the whole course



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of a true Christian's earthly life, Christ our Saviour said: "Who-soever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34), and at the Mystical Supper before His suffering on the Cross, He forewarned His disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Neither in vain did the holy Apostles, in complete accord with these words of the Divine Teacher, instruct Christians: "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), or "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:21).

But this transient, earthly world in which the "progressives," despite the sorry witness of their own eyes, promise the people some completely illusory, happy, "paradisiacal" life with total well-being and prosperity for all, is doomed to destruction on the "day of the Lord," according to the clear teaching of the word of God when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3:10).

Modern thinkers do not want to hear of this, saying that this might happen "some day," "many million years hence," but "never to-day." By such statements they liken themselves to the "scoffers" the holy Apostle also refers to, alerting Christians to the dangers lurking for the morality of Christian people. "Know this first, that there shall come in the last days deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (II Peter 3:3-4). It is characteristic indication that those who speak thus are people who are "walking after their own lusts!" To such "lusts" have they surrendered themselves, darkening the eyes of their souls so that they no longer see anything, for they look at everything only from the distorted point of view of their "lusts," which occupy all their attention and interest.

Yet, our Lord Himself clearly taught us not to think of relegating His Second Coming to some vague, remote future-"millions of years hence," -but commanded us to expect Him always, comparing His arrival in its suddenness to that of a thief: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken into. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:42-44). The "faithful and wise servant" never says that the Second Coming will be "some-time," "after many, many years," and that it is thus not necessary to trouble oneself with this thought, for he knows that the Lord Himself has forbidden him to say: "my Lord delayeth His coming" (Matthew 24:48).

What, then, can be said of those who not only do not consider the possibility of the nearness of the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ, which many signs indicate to us, but believe in some imaginary progress of humanity and the approach of a general well-being and prosperity, although all of modern life, with



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its total decline of true faith and morality, with its terrible, destructive inventions which deal death to man, simply cries out against this. Such people are totally alien to Christianity, even though they bear the exalted positions and titles of Christian clerics and hierarchs!

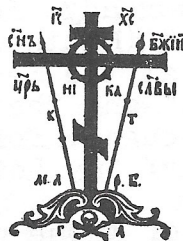
One must know and remember that it is such earthly "progress" such illusory well-being and prosperity of man on earth, that Antichrist, Christ's opponent, promises to give to the people. His servants, who are preparing for his reign on earth, are already striving beforehand in like manner to influence the people, shouting and preaching everywhere about this "paradise on earth" which supposedly awaits the people. And all those who strive for this earthly "progress" forgetting Christ's words: "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33), who avoid bearing their cross as Christ's commands, but think only of how they might make the world better and more free, richer and more carefree, enjoying all the earthly goods and pleasures, are in the same camp with the servants of the imminent Antichrist, working consciously or unconsciously for his swift appearance and reign in the world.

Such as these are not of Christ, but of Antichrist!

But we, if we are true Christians and do not falsely or hypocritically bear the name "Christian," must gaze constantly upon the Cross of Christ, that saving sign of God's love for us, the token of our salvation, and drawing therefrom abundant and grace-imparting powers "which pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3), must bear our earthly life as but a sojourn in a hostel, whence we must return home, to those "heavenly mansions" which the Lord has prepared for us by His suffering on the Cross (John 14:2).

With the great Apostle, we must "consider all things as dung in order to win Christ" (Philemon 3:20). This we must ever constantly keep in mind.

Soon all will come to an end -all this temporal, transient, corrupt earthly world. Surely we shall not lose our hope of eternal life by surrendering ourselves to our petty passions and lusts! "Seek those things which are above," the holy Apostle Paul thus exhorts us, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).\*



\* Translated from: True Orthodoxy and the Modern World, by Archbishop Averky (Jordanville, N.Y.: St. Job of Pochaev Press, 1971), pp. 295-299. Reprinted in Orthodox Life., Vol. 28, No. 6 November-December, 1978., pp. 23-26.



## CHRISTINITY IS THE FEAT OF BEARING THE CROSS

The Divine Cross-Bearer, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself convinces us with all clarity that Christianity is the feat of bearing the cross. When the holy Apostle Peter, not yet enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit and guided by purely human feelings, tried to dissuade Him from the effort of the cross, the Lord "rebuked him, saying: Depart from me, Satan, for thou thinkest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8:31-33). Having called the people together with the disciples right after this, the Lord pronounced the remarkable words which have become fundamental for anyone who sincerely wishes to follow the way of Christian life: "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). "If you take up your cross and follow Christ," asks one of our outstanding educators and preachers, "where will you go? -Obviously, to the same place where He Himself went when he took up His cross, that is, to Golgotha, to suffering, to crucifixion." This is how all true Christians, beginning with the Lord's closest disciples-the holy Apostles, have always understood these words.

From the book of the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the holy Apostles began bearing this cross of suffering for Christ, with complete self-denial, soon after the descent upon them of the Holy Spirit. When, for their courageous preaching about Christ, they were imprisoned by order of the Sanhedrin and then were beaten, they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). And how much suffering did the Apostle Peter undergo for his preaching, and then, as told in the same book of Acts, the holy Apostle Paul, who says of himself that he "was in labors, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Cor. 11:23-27)! Finally both of these great chief Apostles finished their earthly life in martyrdom for Christ. Almost all the rest of the Apostles also finished their life by the labor of martyrdom.

The Apostolic Epistles and among them especially the 14 Epistles of the holy Apostle Paul, which from the importance of their contents are rightly called by many a "second Gospel," likewise characterize the Christian life as the feat of bearing one's cross. They teach us the same thing which the holy Apostles Paul and Barnabas taught the newly converted Christians during their first missionary journey in Asia Minor, i.e., that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). How



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sharply the holy Apostle James, the brother of the Lord, condemns those Christians who want to live in luxury and enjoy themselves, and, on the contrary, praises those who endure suffering with patience and humility. As an example of enduring evil he proposes taking the prophets "who have spoken in the name of the Lord" and righteous Job (James 5:11). Friendship with the world, i.e. a desire to avoid difficulties and live in passionate pleasures and enjoyment, he calls "enmity with God" (James 4:4). The holy Apostle Peter praises Christians who are patient when they do good suffer for it, saying that it is "pleasing to God" (I Peter 2:20). He even says right out that Christ, Who suffered for us, has left us "an example, that (we) should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:21). "If you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are you" he says further (I Peter 3:14), for this suffering brings us closer to Christ Who suffered for our sins (I Peter 3:17-18) and brings us great spiritual benefit: "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (I Peter 4:1). Here we see a direct invitation to become like our Saviour in bearing out cross and crucifying ourselves, for this frees us from the power of sin which weighs us down and helps us like according to God's will. All authoritative commentators on the sacred books of the New Testament see in these words of the holy Apostle Peter the basis for Christian asceticism. "These words," Bishop Michael explains, "can be paraphrased in this way: you, Christians, have been crucified together with Christ in suffering and died with Him in Baptism and consequently died to sin, for one who has died is free from sin, has ceased sinning; one who has suffered in the flesh as Christ suffered in the flesh and has died with Him in Baptism has stopped sinning and should henceforth like according to God's will, not human desires".\* The beloved disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, St. John the Theologian, decisively warns Christians against love for this world when he says that "all that is in the world: the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 5:19), and thus "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). And these words are firm foundation for Christian asceticism, which demands the renunciation of the enjoyment of the sinful good things of the world, and thus is unavoidably connected with sorrows similar to the sorrows of bearing the cross for man's passionate nature damaged by sin. The holy Apostle Paul speaks many times in the whole series of his epistles about this bearing the cross which is essential for attaining Christian perfection. It is only through misunderstanding that the Protestants and, following them, the whole multitude of sectarians who deny asceticism consider the holy Apostle the founder of their false teaching about justification by faith alone, without good works. What else if not an exhortation to the ascetic exercise of bearing the cross are the so very expressive words of the holy Apostle Paul: "they that are

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\* The Catholic Epistles of the Holy Apostles with Introduction and Detailed Explanatory Notes by Bishop Michael, p.203.



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Christ's have crucified the flesh with affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24)? Consequently those who deny the way of bearing of the cross, do no consider it necessary to crucify their flesh with its passions and lusts, and consider asceticism non essential in Christianity are not Christ's; they are not Christians, even if they call themselves such. And this is quite understandable and strictly logical, for according to the words of the same holy Apostle Paul, "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would" (Gal. 5:17). Those who act according to the flesh, though, "shall not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). The holy Apostle Paul speaks remarkably forcefully in his Epistle to the Romans about this extreme corruption of human nature which urgently demands the effort of crucifying the self: "for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" (Gal. 7:15) - "the good which I want to do, I do not do, while the evil which I do not want to do, I do." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Gal. 7:19-24). And this is why "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8), for "to be carnally minded is death" and "enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:6-7). The great apostle of the Gentiles says of himself that he does not just command others to follow this path of bearing the cross and crucifying the self as completely essential for the Christian in his unceasing battle with the passions and lusts, but also follows this same path himself: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). In the eighth chapter the holy Apostle Paul fervently calls all Christians to that path of bearing the cross which alone is able to make us "children and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ": "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together with Him" (Rom. 8:17). Christians should not be afraid of this suffering, for it is nothing in comparison to the glory which awaits us in the future life: "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 18), i.e. "the present temporary suffering is worth nothing in comparison to the glory which will be revealed in us."

One could cite many more places from the Word of God which show in the most convincing manner that Christianity is bearing the cross, the act of self-crucifixion, consisting of ceaseless "unseen warfare." This is a never-ending battle in the Christian's soul with the sinful passions and lusts until they are completely rooted out and replaced by the Christian virtues which are the opposites of these passions and lusts and which are enumerated by the holy Apostle Paul, for example, in his Epistle to the Galatians (5:22-23), where he calls them the "fruit of the spirit." These are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. We think, however, that even the texts cited are quite sufficient to refute the wrong opinion of those who wish to



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understand Christianity in a different way.

If we now turn to the Sacred Tradition of our Church, to the degrees of the Ecumenical and Local Councils and of the Holy Fathers, to the service books, to the works of the Holy Fathers, and to the lives of the holy martyrs, ascetics, bishops and other saints of God, we find here too, literally at every step, a decisive confirmation of the truthfulness of a remarkable statement of a great ascetic and guide to the spiritual life, our righteous and god-bearing father Isaac the Syrian: "The way of God is a daily cross. No one will ascent to heaven by living lukewarmly. We know about the lukewarm way and where it ends up".\*

How strict our canons are! What strictness of life, a genuine feat of bearing the cross they demand not only from bishops, clergymen and monks, but also from laymen! And could such rules possible have appeared in the world if there were not in those blessed times a corresponding strictness of life among Christians? It is only now when the bases of genuinely Christian life are shattered to the foundation that many people find these rules "out of date" and demand that they be changed or even completely abandoned. But it is not the rules which are "out of date," but modern "Christians" who have raised up within themselves the "old man" with all its power in place of the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24), and in which all True Christians who have been enlightened by the mysteries of the Church are clothed. Indeed! Let us take, for example, a canon like the 69th canon of the Holy Apostles: "If any bishop, or priest, or deacon, or subdeacon, or reader, or singer does not fast in the holy lent before Pascha, or Wednesday, or on Friday, except for being hindered by bodily sickness, let him be deposed. But if it be a layman, let him be excommunicated." If modern "Christians" do not find it necessary to take this canon into account, does this mean that it is "out of date" and should be changed? Then one is forced to recognize but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21)! By the way, we see now how just were those words and how right Bishop Theophan, the Vyshenskiy Recluse, was when he said: "Can one think that where there is no prayer and fasting, the devil is already there? One can!" \*\* Does not really modern pseudo-Christian humanity, which has self-confidently given up the only faithful weapon against the dark demonic powers-prayer and fasting-find itself in a condition of real demonic possession? Is that not all genuine demonic possession which has been going on for over 36 years already in our unhappy motherland? Is it not the most real demonic possession which gave birth to the horrors and cruelties, unheard of in the history of mankind, of the Second World War with its aerial bombardment, and which is now preparing an even more terrible Thrid World War? No one<sup>who</sup> rejects the effort of prayer and fasting is capable of doing anything but evil, and all his apparent good, if he has any, is in truth not good at all, but also evil, because according to Christ's words: "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit":

\* Works, p. 158.

\*\* Thoughts for Every Day of the Year, p. 245.



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"do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:18,16). "Beware," Christ therefore says, "of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are rav-  
ening wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

Alas! These false prophets who deny the meaning of the efforts of prayer and fasting in Christianity and who teach Christians not to deny the world lying in evil with its passions and lusts, but to love that world, despite the clear teaching of the Word of God and the Holy Fathers, have bored deeply into contemporary Christian society and are being quite successful in it. And this, of course, is not suprising, for what could be more attractive than the thought that the effort of bearing the cross is unnecessary and that salvation is easy, without any sort of labors and efforts?! What is saddest of all is that such false prophets and now being multiplied in all the local Orthodox Churches, are moving into controlling positions and schisms in their own Orthodox milieu, they are supporting "ecumenical" rapprochement and union with their more like-minded Protestants and sectarians. They are not ashamed even publicly to make such statements as that "for rapprochement for the Protestants we will have to throw our the monastic asceticism of Orthodoxy." Right before our eyes thus the words of the Great Apostle are being fulfilled: "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits" (I Tim. 4:1).

This is clear apostasy, clear betrayal of holy Orthodoxy. For it is one thing when a person sins from the weakness of his nature and then repents and bewails his sin, but it is an entirely different matter when, after sinning without repenting, he tries to find a principled basis for his sin and even develops a whole view of the world which justifies his sin. And it is this very view of the world, which does not wish to see the effort of bearing the cross, the effort of fighting with one's own passions and lusts in Christianity, which is more and more boldly raising its head. It is attracting many modern weak-spirited and luke-warm Christians to the broad and open way-the way of destruction according to Christ's words. It is more terrible and harmful than the ancient heresies condemned by the Church at the Ecumenical Councils, for it hypocritically hides itself under the "sheep's clothing" of pseudo-Christian love and with its cunningly contrived, flattering distortions it strikes at the Christian dogma which most closely affects us -the doctrine of our salvation through following Christ on the way of bearing the cross and crucifying ourselves.

"See then," brother, "that you walk circumspectly!" for truly "the days are evil" now more than ever before (Eph. 5:15-16). As once Satan attempted to employ Peter's altruistic feelings to turn the Lord Jesus Christ Himself away from the cross by which he saved mankind (Matt. 16:21-23), even so now the same Satan is attempting through his far from altruistic like-minded followers to turn contemporary Christians away from the only saving way-that of imitation of Christ, Who gave us the example of asceticism, in bearing the cross and crucifying oneself. Observing the actions of these



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false teachers and seeing the fruits of their labors, we can say with certainty that they are undoubtedly hired servants of the enemies of our holy faith and Church who have set themselves the task of corrupting our Church from within and in that way destroying it. We are not afraid of this, for we know the promise of the Divine Founder of our Church that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), but we ought to fear for ourselves and for our neighbors lest we surrender to Satanic temptation and fall away from union with the true Church which preaches the only way of salvation commanded us by the Word of God-the way of bearing the cross. \*



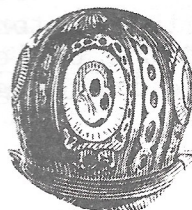
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\* Translated from the Russian by Father Deacon Seraphim Johnson.,  
The Present Times in the Light of God's Word: Sermons and Speeches.,  
Vol. I., pp. 41-47., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Monast-  
ery., Jordanville, New York.





HIS EMINENCE  
ARCHBISHOP AVERKY  
OF SYRACUSE AND HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY





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"...but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (St. Matthew 18:17).

"The preaching of the Apostles and the dogmas of the Fathers confirmed the faith of the Church" (Kontakion -7th week after Holy Pascha).

"This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the Orthodox faith, this is the faith ascertained as universal" (Sunday of Holy Orthodoxy).

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (St. Matthew 10:32-33). So spoke Christ-Truth who came into the world, that he "should bear witness unto the truth" (St. John 18:37), (and if), (this) knowledge and the full mastering of (this truth) is lacking, there is no salvation for man (St. John 8:31-51). This is why in His great prayer as the first Hierarch, before His offering Himself in sacrifice for the sins of the people, He prayed to God the Father about His disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (St. John 17:17-19). From this it is to be understood that for the Christian truth is dearer than everything else, and along with this fact that the confessing of this truth through word and through actions, -through all of one's life- is the first and most important duty of the Christian. And this is what the Holy Apostle James, the Lord's brother, says: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him: Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (St. James 5:19-20), and the beloved disciple of Christ, St. John the Theologian resolutely ascertains: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III. St. John 4), and the great Apostle of the gentiles, St. Paul, wishing to describe the Church to the newly ordained Episcopal of Ephesus, Timothy, whom he has made Bishop taking inconsideration Her essential side, defines Her so: "...the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I St. Timothy 3:15). If we turn there upon towards the history is an incessant struggle of the Church in the person of the believing Bishops and of the ones who follow after Her for the Truth against error. The first period



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of the history of Christianity is the struggle for truth against the error of Judaism and paganism. How terrible and bloody was this struggle, marking the occasion of the shedding of much blood of an unnumerable number of Christian martyrs! And the blood of these Holy Martyrs, presented itself as witness of the truth (in Greek the word martyr means witness), making itself the foundation of the majestic edifices of the Church. The confessing of the Truth, the struggle for Truth characterizes also very strikingly the second period of Church history, when after the cessation of the persecution by the pagans, sprang up a new, and yet more dangerous persecution against the truth of the Christian teaching from the false teachers - the heretics. And this period gave the Church a great multitude of strugglers for the Truth, who exposed for everlasting time clearly and accurately the truth teaching of the Church in the resolutions of the Oecumenical Councils and in their writings full of divine wisdom, guarding Her (the Church) against all false teachings.

But it is self evident that the struggle against truth waged by the enemy of God and the enemy of human salvation, the devil, who according to the Lord Himself is "for he is a liar, and the father of it" (St. John 8:44), did not cease, until the end of the world will not cease, and for this reason a firm stand in the truth by means of confessing and of a tireless struggle for truth's sake, right up to the readiness to lay down one's soul for it's sake, remains the important moral duty of each genuine Christian. The last and decisive battle against the Christian truth will take place before the end of the world and the second coming of Christ, when the devil through his faithful spiritual son, the Antichrist, will endeavor to avert from truth "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (St. Matthew 24:24).

Today we experience once more a terrible time of intensified persecution against the Church and against the truth of the Christian faith that She contains, and because of this it is especially blessed time now to remember about the moral duty of confessing which is important to us. The onset of the present persecutions was giving by the west adjuring from the fundamental Christian truths, taking the shape, first of papism, and after of protestantism. On the soil of these western false teachings revived thereupon paganism in the form of the so called 'humanism', which having turned away from God, made of each man an earthly god. And from there the transition came naturally from the worship of God to the worship of God's enemy, Satan, who, takes the aspect of "an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14), and there where this is not necessary, without this endeavor in all things to indulge the passions and lusts of the man who is stepping back from Christian truth, if in order only to fasten him firmly for ever in his power. It is not astonishing therefore that in the present time cells of such secret ( and at times obvious ones ) organizations which bow to Satan, are largely spread over the whole world, to rule the destinies of this world. The result everywhere is a strengthening of the persecution against the Church and the Christian faith, which bears only various characters according to the local conditions and



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circumstances. Sometimes they take the shape of blood persecutions (in Russia), sometime they take the form of the 'cold war' by way of different kinds of oppressions and the contriving of conditions of life such that only exceptionally personalities -spiritual heroes- find themselves in a condition to confess their faith, no reudiating Christ and not trampling under foot the truth of the Christian teaching, if only practically. Precisely these worshippers of Satan installed in Russia revolutionary cells in order to destroy Holy Russia, for them hateful, and which was the most important stronghold of the non-damaged Christian faith, confessing it against the whole world. By way of lies and calumies, the usual weapons of the devil, they endeavoured to entice 'if possible', even the best representatives of our youth, idealistically minded, in order to wreck with their hands the stronghold of Orthodoxy which stood in their way, impeding their realizing their infernal projects -to wit the subjection of all mankind to the power of Satan. And the Lord betrayed all of them, letting them to their own fall: many paid their error, with their blood, many experienced the torments of Hell before the time of eternal torments in Hell. But woe to those who have shun here below the judgment of God and did not repent 'while they were at law' in front of the incorruptible and impartial Judge!

It was not much, however, for the servants of Satan to destroy only the Holy Empire of Orthodox Russia: they needed to destroy the Russian Holy Orthodox Church. In their satanic and blind spite they hoped that then it would be easy for them to do away with Holy Orthodoxy in the whole world also. The undermining of the Russian Orthodox Church started under the aspect of the spreading of all the possible sects, and after, in the taking of root of protestant, liberal and humanistic ideas inside the very Church. Even long before the revolution matured at home (in Russia) a spirit of the 'living church' and of 'renovation', whose problem it was to decompose the Church from the inside. The pernicious spirit took root under the seemly pretext of leading back the Church to the apostolic times. The Church, as though supposedly necrotized, was called up to become 'living'. This spirit of living church modernism, after the downfall of the Orthodox Russia started quickly to spread also to the other estates of the Orthodox Churches. And when in the middle of the enormous (according to its number) emigration, disseminated all the world over, quite naturally the Russian Orthodox Church beyond the frontiers rejoiced, at the receiving of the canonical basis of her existence thanks to the significant ukaze of His Holiness the Patriarch Tikhon, dated from the 7/20 November 1920, No. 362, then the worshippers of Satan, who had destroyed the Russian Orthodox State and set up a terrible bloody persecution against the Church in Russia were up in arms against her (the Russian Orthodox Church beyond the frontiers) in order to do away with her. Every kinds of means were set going, even



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right up to the use of ecclesiastical canons, in view of demonstrating the non-canonicity and illegality of its very existence. By God's permission, the Holy Christian truth foes made haste to produce a schism inside her and in the broken portions already at full liberty, without shame they all started to instill this pernicious spirit of the living church, protestantism, liberalism and modernism of those who cherished the idea of humanism. The newly fabricated teaching of 'Sophianism', reviling of genuine Orthodoxy, via the appropriation of the contemptuous nickname of 'Orthodoxism' which was given it, strove towards the narrow rapprochement with protestantism under the famous 'teaching' called 'oecumenism', in the foundation of which lies, for the most part carefully concealed, but sometimes owing to imprudence displayed, an idea of the equivalence of all the confessions of faith with various points of view bringing to light allegedly one and the same truth. It is a very diffused and not at all Orthodox interpretation of the concept of the Church, which, in the end, is unusually pernicious, a repudiation in the Christian moral life of the very existence of Orthodox Christian morals, so clearly expressed in the words of the Saviour Himself: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (St. Matthew 7: 13-14). On one side we have the repudiation of podvig of ascetism in personal life, so clearly ordered by the Christ Himself as by His Holy Apostles in the whole series of the numerous sayings in the extent of all the Holy Scripture, and thereby-it is dreadful to say -the indirect erection of abuses against the great prophets of Christianity, glorifying the Church, as against these holy ones who were pleasing to God and those celebrating Her in the everyday Church singing. On the other side we have the desire and the whole of its attention giving to the concentration on the building of an earthly life here below in spite of the clear teaching of the word of God: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Of course this is a consequence of took weak a faith in the reality of what is to come. There is also the trying to combine the service of 'God and Mammon', the service of some kind of abstract ideals: 'Truth, Goodness, Beauty' which the humanists substitute for the personal Living God, together with a careful suggestion of thought that sin is not to be feared, like the 'fanatic ascetics' (do), then those that are killers of the 'joy of this life', for Christ has illuminated and transformed the world in such a way that sin today is no longer sin. Here is with what lines it is possible to describe this really heretical trend, destructive for the Christian life. Alas! It speedily sprouted really deep roots in all the provinces of the Orthodox Churches, finding support for itself and protection even among some impressive hierarchs. In it already is educated and continues to be brought up a considerable portion of the contemporary Orthodox clergy, by it is contaminated really



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Orthodox faith: it is this faith that has clear and unquestionable foundations in the Holy Scripture and in the Holy Tradition which confessed and preached the Fathers, 'angels on earth and celestial men', according to Christ's words: "the ones who shall do and shall teach," for this reason "the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (St. Matthew 5:19). Let them know all of them, that there no higher crime the disobedience to the Church, which become apparent especially in the case of heretics and schismatics, and this is why let us rise above all our earthly intercourse with this Church, which did not acquire for herself any novelty, but which saintly and without any variation keeps the apostolic teaching of the faith and the one of the Holy Fathers as well as their piety - the great and Holy Truth which she received from the Founder Our Lord Jesus Christ. If we don't want our eternal perdition we must take upon ourselves the podvig of confessing this truth, being ready to stand up for it even unto death, remembering the remarkable words of the courageous and unshakable servant of Divine Truth, the great Oecumenical teacher and Hierarch, and Father of the Church, Saint Gregory the Theologian: "When a pursuit goes on in an evidently impious way, then one must rather go to be burnt or beheaded, discarding the demand of the time and of the rulers (I dare say not only the worldly ones but the spiritual ones also) and generally speaking discarding everything, than join in an evil yeast and kiss what is infected and contagious. The most terrible of everything is to fear somebody more than God and instead of possessing this fear which befits the servant of truth, to become a traitor to the teaching of the faith and truth." \*



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\* 6th Sermon of St. Gregory the Theologian.  
Translated from the Russian by Mother Maria-Nun (Holy Nativity Convent Monastery, Boston, Massachusetts)., from: "The Present Times in the Light of God's Word. Sermons and Speeches"., Vol., I., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Monastery., Jordanville, N.Y., 1975, pp. 34-40.



## THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST AND THE FORERUNNER OF ANTICHRIST

From the second chapter of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians it is clear that the teaching about the Antichrist entered into the content of the earliest apostolic evangelization. After giving a description of the Antichrist in the third and fourth verses of that chapter, the holy Apostle writes further to the Thessalonians, "Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you this? (I Thess. 5:5)". -One cannot help considering it noteworthy that in the short period that he spent in Thessalonika the holy Apostle Paul not only did not pass over the teaching on the Antichrist in silence, as something of secondary nature and not very important, but rather considered it necessary to expound this teaching in complete detail. And in this, his second epistle, he merely repeats what he had earlier said about the Antichrist with his own mouth.

But why is it so important to know this teaching?

Because, as the Holy Fathers warn us beforehand, he who ignores this teaching, considering it unimportant and not essential in Christianity, will not recognize the Antichrist and will worship him.

But is it really possible not to recognize the Antichrist?

Yes, it is possible! This is what Bishop Ignatii (Bryanchaninov), who collected into one place everything said about the Antichrist by the ancient Holy Fathers, says about it:

"Antichrist will call himself a preacher and restorer of true knowledge of God: those who do not understand Christianity will see in him a representative and champion of true religion and will join themselves to him. Antichrist will appear to be gentle, merciful, full of love and of all virtues: he will be recognized as such and obeyed on account of his most exalted virtue by those who recognize fallen human nature as the truth.... Antichrist will offer to mankind the organization of the highest earthly well-being and prosperity, he will offer honors, wealth, majesty, and bodily comforts and pleasures: those who seek earthly things will accept the Antichrist and call him their master. Antichrist will reveal before mankind a shameful display of striking miracles similar to the cunning presentations of the theater...he will instill fear by the terrors and wonders of his miracles, and by them satisfy vanity and human pride, he will satisfy carnal sophistry and superstition, and will confuse human learning: all men who are guided by the light of their fallen nature and who are foreign to guidance by the light of God will be attracted to obey the deceiver".\* The Antichrist will be accepted with excitement by apostates from Christianity, but it is deserving of deep attention and mourning, as the Holy Fathers note, that the chosen themselves will be uncertain about the person of the Antichrist, so skillfully will he be able to conceal from external observation the Satanic evil rooted in him. "The Antichrist's opponents will be considered trouble-makers and enemies of the general welfare and good order; they will be subjected to both concealed and open

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\* Vol. IV, p. 297.



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persecution, torture, and execution".\* All who refuse to worship the Antichrist will fall into the most painful and difficult position: "their small number will seem insignificant before all mankind, and their opinion will be thought especially feeble, subject to general contempt, hatred, slander, and oppression; violent death will be their lot".\*\*

Pious reader! Do you not find that the picture described above to some extent reminds one of what is already going on in the world?

Yes! But where is the Antichrist? Has he really come already?

We do not yet see Antichrist himself, but his spirit obviously is settling in and already beginning to rule in the world. A large number of forerunners of Antichrist are preparing with tremendous energy for his arrival, his triumph, and his enthronement among mankind. Of course, a very long and concentrated preparation is necessary for the Antichrist to be able to be accepted amongst Christian people. It has been and is being conducted from the very times of the apostles with ever greater intensity. Thus even the Apostle St. John the Theologian wrote in his First General Epistle: "Every spirit which does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God: but that is the spirit of Antichrist, of which you have heard that it should come, and even now it is already in the world" (I John 4:3). "Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22), and, finally, "As you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" (I John 2:18). The learned commentator on the Holy Scripture, Bishop Michael, remarks that in the Greek original the name "Antichrist" has the definite article, which completely distinguishes this name as that of a well-known, definite person, while the other "antichrists" do not have a definite article and, consequently, as being "many," are distinguished from him. These "many antichrists" are only the forerunners of that Antichrist who will appear before Christ's Second Coming and the end of the world: they are, as it were, "reflections" of their "Prototype" -the individual Antichrist who is to come. They bear the spirit of Antichrist, and it is their task to lay the proper groundwork for the advent of Antichrist and to create propitious circumstances for his appearance in the world.

These "forerunners" of the Antichrist also direct that worldwide process which the Apostle St. Paul called "apostasy" (II Thess. 2:3). The essence of this process is Christian mankind's ever greater departure from the genuine, uncorrupted teaching of the Gospel and the replacement of the Gospel commands with other ideals. The destructive nature of these ideals proposed to mankind by the Antichrist's forerunners is that they sometimes seem acceptable for Christians, compatible with Christianity, while in reality they are profoundly opposed to it; they gratify human passions and lusts and confirm mankind's fallen nature in its fallen state.

Can one trace this process of "apostasy" in history and in life?

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\* ibid.

\*\* ibid.



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One both can and should! One should in order to save oneself and one's neighbors from being attracted into this process, to draw back from it, to save oneself from being infected by the spirit of Antichrist which more and more is taking over the world.

The devil, of course, could not reconcile himself to the appearance of Christianity in the world, and so from the times of the Apostles we see the "spirit of Antichrist" at work in Christian people. The first "forerunners of Antichrist" were Simon Magus, Cerinthus, and the Nicolaitians, with whom the holy Apostles had to fight. Then came the Gnostics and a whole crowd of every possible sort of heretic with which the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church had to fight over the course of several centuries. In the first ten centuries of the Christian era the spirit of genuine faith and piety was, however, still strong enough in Christians that it enjoyed every time a brilliant victory over the "spirit of Antichrist" and the Church of Christ, despite all the heavy trials it endured, was triumphant over its enemies.

But then by the middle of the eleventh century the "spirit of Antichrist" had so firmly taken root in the West that it was able completely to tear away a whole half of Christendom from union with the Universal Church. The result of this was "Papism" with its many and varied departures from genuine Christian teaching on faith and piety -with its newly conceived dogmas, defective morality, indulgences, the "sacred inquisition," and similar perversions.

This was the first decisive victory of the "forerunners of Antichrist."

Others soon followed after it.

At the end of the middle ages, to totally root out the remnants of Christianity, the same "spirit of Antichrist" conceived in the bosom of "Papism," which had torn itself away from the true Orthodox faith, movements which were completely opposed to Christianity-unrestrained free thought, "humanism," which places man himself in the place of God, and, finally, "atheism," or total godlessness. It was not without the strong influence of these movements that there occurred in the 16th century a schism within the Papal church organization itself, becoming known as "Protestantism," which supposedly undertook to "reform" the Church, but which in reality went still further on the way of "apostasy" and denied the very essence of the Church. Protestantism in turn began more and more to break up into fragments, "sects," many of which at the present time have departed so far from Christianity that they deny its most important dogmas and even faith in the Divinity of the Founder of Christianity, the Lord Jesus Christ. This process by which the most bigoted and ridiculous new sects are constantly arising has not stopped even now. It is extremely characteristic how clearly the "spirit of Antichrist" is manifested in all these sects. The majority, if not all, of them talk a lot about the Second Coming of Christ and await him with special impatience and excitement (e.g. the Adventists), but they are silent about the advent of the Antichrist which will precede it, or else they affirm that the Antichrist already exists in the person of the Pope of Rome. Typical in this regard was the recent conference held in Evanston, organized by Protestants and sectarians and conducted under the device: "Christ-the Hope of the World." Much, very much



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was said at this conference about the "Second Coming of Christ" and about the blessings which it would bring to men on earth (!?), but there was total silence about the Antichrist! Does this not naturally lead one to the thought that Protestants and sectarians are gradually being prepared by their leaders to accept the Antichrist when he appears as Christ Himself?

At the same time the clearly antichristian teachings of materialism, socialism, and Marxism-communism are appearing and being propagandized in the West, and social and political organizations with secret worship of Satan are spreading their nets ever wider, acting just as the Antichrist himself will act, "with diabolical craftiness and hypocrisy" (as Bishop Ignatii puts it). The heads of these organizations, these truly "foxes in heart and wolves in soul" (as St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher of Mt. Athos said) are gradually taking control through the whole world not only of public and political life, but also of people's religious life. This is all directed to one goal-the preparation of conditions propitious for humanity's accepting the Antichrist and worshipping him as its king and god.

The chief hindrance on the way to the attaining of this goal was Orthodox Russia, the only powerful support of the true Christian Orthodox faith in the world, with its Emperor, the sovereign Defender and Protector of the whole Orthodox Church. In the course of more than two centuries the "forerunners" of the Antichrist worked systematically and stubbornly to transform the Orthodox Russian Empire into the atheist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. When this was achieved, a new effort was undertaken with the aim of destroying the Orthodox Church itself, working simultaneously in two directions: by means of horrible, unheard-of persecutions, all but surpassing the persecutions of the first centuries of Christianity; and by means of dissolution from within with the help of Living Church ideas, renovationism, and the planting of all sorts of free-thinking modernist tendencies in the spirit of Protestantism. In the end in most Orthodox countries which survived devastation the remnants of the local Churches were made into sorry tools of a power at war with God. Bountiful fruit, however, has been gathered by the "spirit of Antichrist" in the other Orthodox churches too, which remained free. They are strongly infected by the poison of free-thinking liberalism and modernism which is leading them to merger with Protestantism. Thank God, there is still a remnant in them which has not bowed the knee before the "spirit of Antichrist" which is ever more and more raising its head! Our Russian Church Abroad is still remaining firm also, although the followers of the approaching Antichrist have created a destructive schism in it, and now they are trying to destroy it completely, wipe it off the face of the earth, using for this all possible means, the chief of which is lying and slander, the natural weapons of the father of lies and slanderer from the beginning, the devil.

The spectacle in the world is in general quite without cheer, and would be a cause to get discouraged and fall into despair if we did not know that "it is thus written" in the Word of God and



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all of this must be so.

What should we do and how should we react?

"Apostasy is permitted by God," as one of the great instructors in the spiritual life of our time, Bishop Ignatii (Brianchaninov) teaches us, "do not attempt to stop it with your powerless hand. Flee from it yourself, protect yourself from it; that is enough for you to do. Learn to know the spirit of the age, study it, so whenever possible you will be able to avoid its influence... Only God's special mercy is able to stop this all-destroying moral epidemic, to stop it for awhile, because it is necessary that everything foretold by the Scriptures happen. Judging by the spirit of the time and the intellectual ferment, one must suppose that the building of the Church, which has been shaking for some time, will fall quickly and horribly. There is no one to stop and oppose it. The measures undertaken to support it are borrowed and hasten its fall, rather than stopping it. -There is no one who can be expected to restore Christianity. The vessels of the Holy Spirit have finally dried up everywhere, even in the monasteries, those treasuries of piety and grace... The salt has lost its savor. In the chief pastors of the Church there remains only a weak, dim, inconsistent, and incorrect understanding according to the letter which kills spiritual life in Christian society and destroys Christianity, which is an action, not a letter. It is distressing to see to whom the sheep of Christ have been entrusted, to whom their direction and salvation have been committed. But this has been permitted by God... God's merciful patience delays and postpones the decisive disintegration for the small remnant of those being saved, while those who are decaying or have decayed attain the fullness of their corruption. Those who are being saved must understand this and make use of the time given them for salvation... May the merciful Lord shield the remnant of those who believe in Him! But this remnant is meager and is becoming more and more so.... "Let him who is being saved save his soul," \* says the Spirit of God to remnant of Christians."

*backwards,  
it is foretold  
because it  
must happen.*

Since the time when Bishop Ignatii wrote this, the situation in the world has grown worse, not better. "Since the Antichrist will have as his main task the drawing of everyone away from Christ," says the other great spirit-filled preceptor of our time, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, "he will not appear as long as royal authority remains in force. It will not allow him to develop, it will hinder his acting in his own spirit. This, then, is the "one who holds back" (II Thess. 2:7). But when royal authority falls, and the people everywhere institute self-government (republics, democracies), then there will be room for the Antichrist to act. It will not be hard for Satan to prepare voices in favor of renouncing Christ, as experience showed during the French revolution. There will be no one to pronounce an authoritative veto. And so when such regimes, suitable for disclosing the Antichrist's aspirations, are instituted everywhere, then the Antichrist will appear." \*\*

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\* From Volume IV and the Patericon.

\*\* Commentary on St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, chap. 2:6, page 504.



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What Bishop Theophan predicted has happened: the Antichrist's "forerunners" have done their job-the "spirit of Antichrist" is installed everywhere, having everywhere established "regimes, suitable for disclosing the Antichrist's aspirations." Remembering Bishop Ignattii's words that "the Antichrist will be logical, just, and natural result of the general moral and spiritual direction of mankind", we leave it to the reader attentive to surrounding life to draw his own conclusions from what has been said above, while, on our part, we can only repeat:

"Let him who is being saved save his soul!" \*



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\* Translated by Father Deacon Seraphim Johnson., The Present Times in the Light of God's Word: Sermons and Speeches., Vol. 1., pp. 71-77., St. Job of Pochaev Press, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.



## WHEREIN LIES LIFE'S GREATEST EVIL?

"Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." (St. John 5:14)

After His glorious Resurrection from the dead, Our Lord Jesus Christ remained on earth for an additional forty days. During this time, He came to His disciples on more than one occasion, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Accordingly, for forty days we glorify Christ's Resurrection, singing joyous Paschal hymns. In addition, the Sundays of this season are dedicated to the commemoration of the people and events that are independently associated with the feast of Christ's Resurrection -such as the week of St. Thomas, and the week of the Holy Myrrh-bearing Women -or else of those events that took place precisely at this time of year, the Pentecostal period, and which brilliantly attest to the Divine glory, kingly majesty, and omnipotence of Our Lord Jesus Christ; to His sovereignty over the natural world and its laws; intending by this presentation of His Divine power and authority, to prevent any shades of doubt in the great truth of His most glorious Resurrection from the dead.

In the fourth week after Pascha, it is remembered how Our Lord Jesus Christ, with His word alone, healed the oppressive malady of a completely incapacitated man who lay for thirty-years by the pool near the Sheep's Gate, which was visited once each year by an Angel. Descending from Heaven, he would agitate the water, imparting to it the power to heal, but only that one invalid, who would be the first to descend into the pool immediately after the visitation.

A fearful affliction is such total paralysis! And one can imagine, how great must have been the moral agonies of that unfortunate man, when he, who for so long lay near the source of healing, could not be healed, because he did not have anyone, who could lower him into the pool immediately after the agitation of the water. When he had dragged himself to the pool with great difficulty, "another stepped down before him," and all his painful efforts and hopes proved to be in vain.

Seeking this miserable man, the Lord took pity on him, and with His one authoritative word, raised him up from the bed of infirmity. "Arise, take up your bed and walk!" He said to the paralyzed man -and this was enough for the miracle to take place. The infirm man was instantly healed of his severe, longstanding illness, rose to his feet, took up his pallet, and walked away.

Some time later, the Lord met him in the temple, and desiring to impart to him healing of the soul, in addition to healing of the flesh, gave him this portentous counsel: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee," (St. John 5:14). It may be inferred from this, that the fearful illness of the paralytic had been brought on by some previous sins of his. From the Lord's words it is also evident, that every sin is followed closely by physical infirmities and ills of different kinds. In some cases the relation is quite obvious to all: we know, for



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example, that such sins as gluttony, drinking, smoking, unchastity, not infrequently give rise to grave and even incurable diseases. But even any sin, no matter how insignificant it may be, always reflects detrimentally on the body's health. All sin, to a greater or lesser extent, troubles the conscience, sickens the soul, veils it in darkness, sorrow, and hopelessness. This, in turn, reflects poorly on the nervous system, on the activity of the heart and the circulation of blood, which is the principal guarantor of our physical well-being, and so, the physical health of the sinner, in proportion to the growing frequency of his transgressions becomes progressively undermined.

Thus, this reading from the Gospel convinces us that even the diseases of the flesh -one of the most unpleasant and tormenting evils of our temporal earthly life -ORIGINATE IN SIN, and ultimately lead the sinner to the death which is inescapable for all, the death that is, as the God's Word teaches, no other thing than "the wages of sin" (Romans 6:23).

THERE IS NO OTHER, GREATER EVIL IN LIFE, THAN SIN.

Unfortunately, and especially in our time, this is something that many do not understand!

Modern man, imagining himself to be the representative of a highly refined age, will be greatly put to task in trying to find an answer to the question, "what is the greatest evil that exists? From what do people suffer most?" And that, while it should be clear, that this is the most important question raised by human existence. With what else should people occupy their thoughts, than the definitive determination of life's principal evil, in order to begin the most merciless struggle against it, in order to free us from that evil.

In our day and age, many so-called, "social" and "political workers" like to occupy themselves with the resolution of this issue, and all to no avail.

Some see life's chief evil to lie in the imperfection of the state system, and try to arrive at what they believe is a perfect system. Others see life's chief evil to be the lack of education, the absence of widespread instruction, which they understand to be the teaching of all possible human sciences and their assimilation by all human beings. Still a third group sees the evil of life to lie in social inequality, in the unequitable distribution of wealth and every other of this world's blessings, and fruitlessly and unsuccessfully attempt to establish universal equality among people. A fourth group maintains that life's greatest evil is poverty, unemployment, and so forth, and so on.

All of these people, some of whom are talented and intellectually powerful, but at the same time spiritually blind, limited in spirit, their moral sense atrophied-share an exclusively superficial approach to the question of life's greatest evil, and therefore they are impotent to resolve it in any satisfactory way, and will never resolve it.

And why should we even waste so much effort arguing the point, as if we were straining to break through an open door, when this most



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important, most urgent and relevant question has long since been answered for us, Christians.

LIFE'S GREATEST EVIL IS SIN. Free human existence from the presence of sin, and all our life must be immediately transformed: it will become tranquil and happy, a veritable earthly paradise. Let sin remain to rule among people and you will never, by no external means, impose sense and order on life, nor make it prosperous, fortunate, and joyous for all.

It is precisely of this all-encompassing, all-wasting power of sin that today's Gospel reading speaks.

With His one word alone, the Lord healed an invalid who had lain for 38 years near a healing spring, hoping to be made well, but vainly. And raising him up from his sick bed, He cautioned him respecting the future: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (St. John 5:14).

With these portentous words, the Lord indicated that the cause of the unfortunate man's fearful infirmities lay in the sins he had previously committed. In addition, he warned that sin inevitably brings with it not only such dire diseases as paralysis, but even more dreadful ills.

"Sin no more!" -it is these words of Christ's warning that should be the principal, founding motto of our human existence. He who forgets this great God-given truth will have vainly wasted his efforts in making his own life as well as the lives of other people peaceful, joyous, prosperous, and happy.

He who loves sinning will inevitably sooner or later fall prey to the oppressive affliction of spiritual and physical feebleness. The sufferings of body and of soul will be his lot, and in the life hereafter -everlasting, unremitting torment.

Is it not in this position of the infirm man, lying hopelessly by the Sheep's Gate pool, that all mankind finds itself today, madly rejecting Christ the Saviour, refusing to acknowledge the existence of sin as such, and seeking various paths of life and salvation other than those which Christ, Our Lord points out to us?

Sin reigns ruthlessly among the people of today, smiting both the body and soul with its death-wielding venom. And for so long as sin maintains its dominion, there can be no liberation or deliverance for the world from all the evils that beset it, and it is even meaningless to talk of its prosperity and preservation.

It would seem that experience in life should long since have made this clear and comprehensible to everyone, but Alas! engulfed in the depths of sinful life, led about by diabolical pride and culpable self-love, self-confident people, who put all their trust in themselves alone, easily forget the lessons which life itself teaches them, and no matter how many blows they receive in the course of their existence, whereby the Lord Himself instructs them, nevertheless it is frequent among them that, as God's Word instructs us, "according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Peter 2:22).



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According to Church tradition, that is exactly what happened to the invalid upon whom the Lord had shed His bounty. He did not heed the warning, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." The lesson for the fourth week after Pascha, the week of the invalid, says that this infirm man, so wondrously healed by the Lord, was the very man who struck Our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cheek during the trial before the High Priest (St. John 18:22), for which he obtained "a trial worse than the weakening of limbs" "-that eternal fire, not for eight and thirty years alone, but unto time everlasting, should torment him."

You see to what extreme can come those who do not remember the mercy and generosity of God. Pride and sinful self-esteem can lead the person who is unmindful of himself to the state of a madman, acting rashly, and doom him forever! The desire to ingratiate someone, to gain someone's favor, attention, and thereby some personal reward, frequently drives those who become infatuated with their sinful selves to such truly insane deeds that trail in their wake the most frightening and incorrigible consequences!

It is for this reason that God's Word ranks the servile cultivation of others' favor, the desire to please other people, as one of the most serious and dangerous sins, of which the Apostle Paul speaks in his epistle to the Galatians, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

As the Catechism instructs us, that man, whom we try to please to the point of forgetting God, becomes for us to some degree "an other god" instead of the true God, this makes us to transgress against the first commandment of God's Law: "I am the Lord, thy God: thou shalt have not other gods, but Me."

The One God, our Creator and Benefactor, we must please in all things, and more than anything else in the world, we must fear and avoid sin, which our Lord despises and finds displeasing, and which serves as the main reason for the evils of all possible kinds, that afflict us in this limited earthly life, as well as of everlasting doom in the future life that awaits us all. Christ our Saviour came into this world, and was Crucified, and Rose from the dead, precisely to vanquish sin-life's greatest evil-and to grant us freedom from its oppressive power.

The joy of the Resurrection is the joy of victory over sin. This joy is beyond the reach of those who stubbornly persist in their love of sin, who have no desire to cast it off. They ~~wo~~ do not wish to wage battle with sin, and who thoughtlessly and inconsiderately continue to sin, valuing transgression ~~at naught~~, will never experience in all its force and wholeness, the Grace-filled, pure, holy joy of the Resurrection. For them, it is as if Christ had not risen. The true, light-filled joy is unknown to them. Here their lot is perpetual anxiety, remorse, spiritual yearning, and futility, and there await them hereafter eternal gloom and unbating sufferings.



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All of us who have prepared for Communion, confessed, and partaken of the Communion of the Holy Mysteries during the last Great Lent, by that itself were healed of our afflictions, and now it is only necessary for us to hold steadfastly by Christ's warning, made to the invalid: "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."\*



\* Translated from the Russian: Orthodox Russia., by Miss Maria Belaeff., Issue No. 10. 1976., pp. 1-3., St. Job of Pochaev Press., Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Monastery, Jordanville, New York.



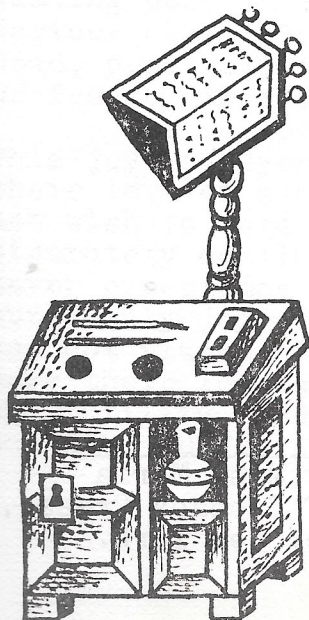
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